

**VERNACULAR SONG FROM A NORTH YORKSHIRE HILL FARM:
CULTURE, CONTEXTS AND COMPARISONS**

Two volumes

Volume I

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Volume I

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ABSTRACT

The first part of this study examines a North Yorkshire farmer's personal narrative, where the motivation and opportunity for his singing emerges from the interplay of location and landscape, family, work and rich social networks. Jack Beeforth (1891-1974) was born when the commercialisation of the music business in England was well under way, and when American influences were beginning both to affect the musical content of popular song and to stimulate mass-marketing methods in its dissemination. In this thesis, evidence of these influences is shown to be scattered throughout the Beeforth repertoire among songs from broadsides and other sources. The eclectic mix of songs in Jack Beeforth's corpus and his disregard for song categories argues that it may be useful to regard him as a 'vernacular', rather than a folk or traditional, singer.

The study goes on to set Jack Beeforth's life as a single, acoustic, unaccompanied singer of songs of the popular culture of his day against the personal narratives of three other English vernacular singers, all four linked in important ways through gender, class, place, occupation and overlapping temporality. It identifies and compares the repertoires of these singers, and examines some important ingredients in the singers' treatment of a selection of these songs, establishing commonalities and diversities in the repertoires and performance. The work looks at Jack Beeforth's singing in its historical context, exploring patterns of cultural practice and change in his own generation and in those that followed.

PREFACE

The motives and intentions which were behind the compilation of the Jack Beeforth tapes are personal and therefore clear, although they are now seen across the thirty years which have elapsed since the recordings were made. The motivations which may have driven the activities of many folk song collectors during the two Folk Song Revivals are explored elsewhere in this thesis. In 1974 it had seemed that the county of Yorkshire with its large population and distinct identity was not fairly represented by a corpus of its ‘own’ folk songs, for after Frank Kidson’s *Traditional Tunes*, first published in 1891, many collectors of English folk song material in the first Folk Song Revival were based in the south and their forays to the north of England, if made at all, were brief. Some amateurs, like the author, were neither deeply aware of the work emerging from the ‘folklore’ departments of the universities in Sheffield and Leeds, nor of the availability of prescriptive ‘how-to’ research manuals, as they pursued their solitary enthusiasm, seeking to enrich their own repertoires from ‘the tradition’ whilst paying their dues by feeding any ‘finds’ into the collective folk corpus.

Such pieces from Ripon and York had already been included, for example, in the Topic LP *Transpennine* featuring revivalist singers Harry Boardman and David Hillery.¹ David

¹ H. Boardman & D. Hillery, *Transpennine* (London: Topic Records TS210, 1971).

Hillery and David Howes collaborated in producing the LP *Trip to Harrogate*² based on a late-eighteenth-century Yorkshire fiddler's tune book found by the latter in Harrogate in the 1960s. It was hoped that Jack Beeforth's material might include items interesting enough to be set by the side of those already assembled.

Further, it must be acknowledged that not least among the motives for the visits to Jack Beeforth was a deepening 'last leaves' apprehension that had worried the collectors of the first Folk Song Revival like Percy Grainger: that one would 'give almost anything ... in order to save them [folk songs] from getting lost and forgotten'.³ In the absence of any unbreachable characterisation of a folk song, problems in identifying the 'authentic' in Jack's contributions would be alleviated (one then believed, *pace* A. L. Lloyd⁴) by the invocation of experience, intuition and instinct, and by timely direction and intercession during the recording process.

Much of this became irrelevant because of this writer's unfamiliarity with the newly-bought recording apparatus. It soon became clear that a fluent and productive *modus operandi* would be simply to switch on the tape-recorder and let it run until the tape's end, and this was how much of the recording was conducted. It was a fortunate if accidental change of plan, for the earlier proposed intention, which had the songs' texts and tunes as the sole objective, had shifted to one in which a dialogue would develop centring on Jack's personal history. The social matrix and cultural context within which he operated would illuminate and give added meaning to the songs as part of Jack's lived experience. These songs might otherwise have been seen merely as interesting but disconnected pieces.

² David Howes et al., *Trip to Harrogate* (Macclesfield: Traditional Sound Recordings TSR027, 1977).

³ K. Dreyfus (ed.), *The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger 1901-4* (London: MacMillan, 1985), 72.

⁴ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (St Albans: Paladin, 1967), 15.

Moreover, much of the initiative in the dialogue passed to the singer who often chose to recount anecdotes and perform songs from his own agenda.

The writer's first contact with Jack Beeforth was made in March 1974 when the former was living in Whitby. Mr Beeforth's name had been passed on by the revivalist singer Alison Potts (now Alison McMorland) who had difficulties in following up Jack as a potential source of 'traditional' material. Jack had retired from farming in 1960 and had lived in Folly Cottage, Burniston, near Scarborough, with his much-loved wife Hannah until her death in 1969, when he moved to his daughter Ethel's home in the village of Sleights. It was at Red Roof, 9 Orchard Road, Sleights that the tape-recordings which are the foundation of this study were made. Ethel's occasional vocal accompaniment to Jack's singing can be heard on some of the tracks on the CDs which complement this study. At the time perceived only as being mistaken, uninvited and discordant, these interventions can now more clearly be seen as integral to Ethel's role as Jack's carer, proffered as sensitive promptings and encouragement for her aged and poorly father. Moreover, they importantly show how Jack's songs were known and shared within his family.

The recordings were not originally made with an intention to use them as the foundation for future academic study; the open-reel tapes had lain almost forgotten along with many other similar recordings made in the early 1970s. The tin chest in which they were kept for nearly thirty years suffered the extremes of cold, heat and humidity in poorly-insulated attics, and this as well as shortcomings in the actual recording process may account for their variable sound quality. The material on the tapes was transferred to CD format at Newcastle University during the writing of this study. The material has remained unpublished except for four songs which the writer Roy Palmer had sought permission to use in one of the

collections of songs which he has edited;⁵ in addition Palmer has quoted one of Jack Beeforth's anecdotes from these tapes in another of his volumes of songs and commentary.⁶

This study emerges from the now historically located material contained in these Jack Beeforth tapes recorded in 1974. The intervening years from the date of the recordings and this research, had not only taken away the last of his contemporary company of fellow singers and regulars at his three favourite local pubs, but had seen the customary singing events at these locations themselves wither away. The consequent solitary testament is Jack Beeforth's alone, and one of the prime purposes of this thesis is to interpret and locate it within Jack's own cultural, social and economic milieu, before positioning the account in a wider arena. For the first of these objectives important additional background information has flowed from visits to, and correspondence with, Jack's daughter Ethel Pearson and his granddaughter Gail Agar who both still live in the Whitby-Scarborough area, and this connection is still being maintained.

The present writer has drawn from knowledge of matters of local cultural interest gained from his having lived in Whitby intermittently between 1970 and 1995, and from recordings made in the locality other than those of Jack Beeforth, which provide comparative data and which feature speechways, songs and anecdotes from the area. Further, there is a rich bibliography from palaeontology to contemporary local history touching Whitby and its locale, and an enquiring local press which is well integrated into the life of the district. As previously affirmed, the initial aim of this work was to develop a narrative of Jack's life and the place of his songs in it. Jack's history was geographically bound by an area of only a few square miles south of Whitby, but as the research progressed the wide social matrix in which

⁵ Roy Palmer, *Everyman's Book of English Country Songs* (London: Dent, 1979), 75-6, 166-7, 187-8, 211-13.

⁶ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History: Song & Social Comment* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 51.

he was immersed began to be revealed. Although this was interesting and engaging in itself it became clear that a deeper understanding of Jack and his songs could be realised only from extending the study's parameters; a productive course would be through positioning Jack against some other singers, who performed acoustically and without instrumental accompaniment, in his genre.

Most of the recordings used in this comparative analysis have been issued commercially and are referred to accordingly; information about the provenance of the recordings not so issued is informal, and must rest on the goodwill of the informants and its acceptance by the present writer.

The energy of the second Folk Song Revival has largely waned and the popularity of the genre has retreated from its peak in the 1960s and 1970s subverted, perhaps, by changes in popular taste or by commercialisation. 'The entertainment industry of today still succeeds in assimilating cultural impulses from below ... Of skiffle, rock and roll, reggae or punk, none have remained immune to the machine. Even the second folk song revival fell victim to it.'⁷ Nevertheless attachment to this music persists. In England, moreover, there has built up since the 1970s a body of scholarship which has re-examined and re-interpreted the work of previous collectors and commentators from contemporary perspectives, using tools developed through, for example, cultural studies, social and oral history and ethnomusicology.

Important contributions have been made to this corpus of critique in essays, monographs or in more expansive studies by among others, David Atkinson, C. J. Bearman, Georgina Boyes, Ginette Dunn, Vic Gammon, Dave Harker, Michael Pickering, Ian Russell, Martin

⁷ Ian Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 55.

Stokes and Ian Watson. American ethnomusicologists such as Gregory F. Barz, Philip V. Bohlman and Timothy J. Cooley have provided an external perspective. This present study has germinated from recordings made thirty years ago, but it is through the interrogation of this later work that this study's substance and argument has been importantly shaped and its direction focused.

Song collecting has continued, thus weakening the argument that all the non-revival singers in the vernacular idiom have gone, whilst old field recordings of English singers, comprehensively annotated and well-produced, continue to be released by, among others, Musical Traditions, Topic and Veteran record companies to a small but enthusiastic following. These recordings have helped to illuminate many aspects of Jack Beeforth's own legacy: his cultural and social horizons, his attitudes, his repertoire and his singing.

As stated earlier, the foundation of this study is the collection of tapes, made by this writer, of conversations with, and songs sung by, Jack Beeforth. In this thesis, the interrogation of the tapes and the associated material examines the songs' function, meaning and use in Jack Beeforth's own life, and explores the wider issues raised by this material in the current debate around vernacular culture. During Jack's time, a powerful and pervasive communications revolution was gaining momentum. In parallel, increasing commodification of artistic products and forms greatly impinged on the development of the culture of working people operating in the vernacular milieu. At the same time, ideas were still being stimulated and promoted, of a collaborative and idealised golden past in England, whereas much of the country's history had shown profound class and gender inequalities, and tensions in social relations.

The debate takes in the idea of the ossification of some areas of cultural activity, where the forms have, for some, been seen to be of great longevity and impermeable anonymity,

and sets this against the notion of a continuum in an ever-changing cultural landscape. Moreover, within the pervading universalist trends in modern society, there nevertheless remains a space which is occupied by the local and particular, and which is inhabited in this study by Jack Beeforth and singers like him. Further, in this debate, the significance of a tradition, carried through localised evolution, is set against the effect on tradition through spatial and temporal diffusion of individuals, groups and populations.

The discourse around vernacular culture contrasts the ideology of traditionalism, which might be seen as retrogressive, with an active, indigenous usage of materials from the past to inform a social present, which might be seen as progressive in orientation. In this strand of the debate, there are issues about the resuscitation of previously eroded old cultural forms, which are sometimes taken up and re-located within a now-changed social formation.

Discourse continues towards a universally useful characterisation of folk song, with all its oral / literary, anonymous / authored, acoustic / technological and popular culture / other culture dualities. Continuing, also, are the intimations of the demise of the folk song idiom. The apparently dwindling numbers who perform in the genre, and the lack of mass-appeal for this music, is to be seen against the burgeoning sales of World Music and the establishment of folk degrees.

Issues around textual variation and authenticity persist. There are debates about the distinctive and different focuses on socio-geographic and historic influences upon culture. Finally, in this brief summary of some of the important strands in the current debate about vernacular culture, discourse continues concerning the commonalities and diversities in the ways individuals and groups have responded to cultural change.

INTRODUCTION

I: Thesis structure

The first part of this thesis examines the personal narrative of Jack Beeforth, a North Yorkshire hill farmer, and the vernacular culture in which he was embedded. The second part of the thesis places Jack's life, attitudes, repertoire and singing beside those of three other singers who performed acoustically and without instrumental accompaniment in Jack's vernacular genre. The three singers identified: Joseph Taylor, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe shared characteristics of gender and class with Jack Beeforth and they lived, as he did, in a rural milieu on the east side of England working in jobs associated within agriculture. The overlapping life-spans of Jack, and these other three men, describe a temporal continuum taking in most of the nineteenth- and the twentieth-century, embracing the profound cultural transformation then taking place in England. Much of the repertoires of the three had been recorded and their personal narratives to varying degrees documented, and it is from these mostly synchronic and fragmented accounts that much of the data for analysis and comment has been drawn. The thesis is structured in two parts, both contained in Volume I, with 'The songs of Jack Beeforth', Select Bibliography and Select Discography contained in Volume II.

In Part One, **Chapter One** locates Wragby Farm in its landscape. Here Jack Beeforth was born and spent the first part of his life before moving to the adjoining Cook House Farm. Notions of apparent geographical remoteness are set against clear evidence of early accessibility and penetration from outside the area. **Chapter Two** then identifies some of the activities where Jack socialised and found outlets for his singing: quoiting; weddings; hunting; horse-racing, and at work where he sang to his well-loved horses. The context for these activities is examined in **Chapter Three**, where an echo is found for the tensions and anxieties of song ownership in those encountered in running a rented marginal moorland farm, uncovering three important institutions, now degenerated or disappeared, which were central to Jack Beeforth's farming and social life: the Martinmas hirings, the Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association and the Manor of Fyling Court Leet. **Chapter Four** explores some of Jack Beeforth's approaches to his songs and singing; of learning songs; of the problems and advantages of unaccompanied singing. Also discussed are attitudes to different kinds of song and the nature of singing in old age; how the patterns of song gathering have had important mediating influences on the repertoires of singers like Jack. In **Chapter Five** a model is developed for showing the categories of the Jack Beeforth songs, which are set out in **The songs of Jack Beeforth** in Volume II. The chapter discusses the provenance of the songs, and the likely routes by which they came into his repertoire.

In Part Two, the personal narratives of four vernacular singers (Jack Beeforth, Joseph Taylor, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe) are set out in **Chapter Six**, illuminating the following chapters which feature comparisons of all four men. **Chapter Seven** explores themes emerging from the personal narratives in the previous chapter: the men's social positioning and aspects of their attitudes to performance, tradition and change. A brief overview of song collecting in the first and second Folk Song Revivals is given in **Chapter**

Eight. It goes on to compare the four singers' repertoires in an integrated matrix from which songs common to all four singers are established, and appropriate songs for comparison are taken.

Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve set out and compare the singing of the four featured men. In each of these chapters the singers perform a song of the same type, described, respectively, as 'amatory', 'sporting', 'working' and 'sentimental'. (An accompanying compact disc, which is located inside the back cover of Volume I, features the performance of all four men for these songs.) The conclusions, emerging from the comparisons of the performances of the songs sung by the four featured men, and from their narratives, are summarised in **Chapter Thirteen**.

At the conclusion of the thesis, **Chapter Fourteen** shows that Jack Beeforth and singers like him should be regarded as entertainers in the popular idiom whose repertoires carried a substantial content of 'traditional' material; that singers like Jack and the others featured here belonged to a continuum of small-part players in a popular culture which their passing has not brought to a close. It is the tradition itself, it is argued, that faces its demise.

The Beeforth corpus, **The songs of Jack Beeforth**, in Volume II, sets out in alphabetical sequence of title, the tune, text and commentary for each song in Jack Beeforth's known repertoire. The songs have been transferred from magnetic tape to the two accompanying compact discs, which are located inside the back cover of Volume II.

II: Problems in transcription

There have been enduring problems experienced by collectors of songs performed by instrumentally unaccompanied vernacular singers, where the collectors wish to set out the songs in a musical notation which both accurately reflects the performance and is widely

understandable. Even the gifted musician Percy Grainger doubted his own ability to transcribe the singing of his folk informants because of his uncertainties about recognising pitch. ‘Personally I deeply regret having to rely on my own hearing in any delicate matter of pitch. One is so distressingly liable to think one hears what one is expecting to hear. I have caught myself noting radically different intervals in the same passage of the same phonograph record on different occasions.’⁸ Grainger also expressed uncertainties in showing rhythms in his notation: ‘I find it impossible to render into musical notation anything approaching the full charm of the great or slight rhythmic irregularities ever present in traditional solo singing.’⁹

In his paper, ‘Percy Grainger and the Impact of the Phonograph’, Mike Yates discusses some contemporary attitudes to Grainger’s use of the phonograph in collecting folk songs. Yates examined letters between members of the Folk-Song Society’s Editorial Board (critical of the use of the phonograph and in favour of simultaneous transcription), and from Cecil Sharp to Grainger. In this correspondence, Anne Gilchrist (a member of the Editorial Board) wrote: ‘musicians are apt to reproduce tunes as we think they ought or are meant to be rather than as we hear them,’¹⁰ and Sharp’s observations include this revealing assertion: ‘the majority of these rhythmic minutiae have nothing to do with the song itself but only with the artistic presentation of it’.¹¹ Mike Yates concludes: ‘Did Cecil Sharp and Anne Gilchrist really mean to imply that despite the frequent usage of the term “scientific” they were not notating tunes exactly as sung, but rather as the singers implied that they were to be sung? And, if so, can we now fully accept the accuracy of their published transcriptions?’¹²

⁸ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, *JFSS* 12:3 (1908), 152.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Mike Yates, ‘Percy Grainger and the Impact of the Phonograph’, *FMJ* 4:3 (1982), 267.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹² *Ibid.*, 271.

In referring to musical parameters which are not easily notated, Richard Middleton has identified, among other things: non-standard pitch and non-discrete pitch movement; irregular, irrational rhythms, polyrhythms, and rhythmic nuance; nuances of ornamentation, accent, articulation and performer idiolect; specificities (as opposed to abstractions) of timbre.¹³ Although it is possible to develop forms of notation which will cope better with these parameters than does conventional musicological methodology, ‘they are usually so complex as to be difficult to read and work with; in any case, mainstream musicology has shown little interest’.¹⁴

Clearly there have been doubts about the accuracy of simultaneous transcriptions even though they may have been carried out by competent musicians. Moreover, as recording technology has displaced musical transcription and notation as the primary mechanism for the preservation of traditional music, one must doubt the productive pursuit of some definitive accuracy in transcribing the performance of a song, whether the transcription is made with or without technological intervention, and this puts into question whether it is useful to attempt it at all. Further, developments in ethnomusicological scholarship have seen a ‘shift in emphasis from classification, description and explanation of music structures towards attempts to understand music as culture’, this re-orientation recognizing the primacy of the study of a whole cultural context over merely the recovery of cultural artifacts. Though an important part of the cultural matrix in which it is embedded, a song is now able to be regarded, recorded, described and studied using new approaches, technologies and vocabularies:

Not long ago, musical transcription was the distinguishing mark of our discipline [ethnomusicology], not only as a passage rite ... but as a generative

¹³ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), 105.

¹⁴ Ibid.

practice. Transcription told us what we could know about music and how we could know it. Music was objectified, collected, and recorded in order to be transcribed; and transcription enabled analysis and comparison. Transcription – that is, listening to a piece of music and writing it down in Western notation – not only became a guild skill but also ‘wrote across’ lived experience, eliminated the life-world, and transformed what was left (sound) into a representation that could be analysed systematically and then compared with other transcriptions so as to generate and test hypotheses concerning music’s origin and evolution. Today it is not transcription but fieldwork that constitutes ethnomusicology.¹⁵

Whilst ethnomusicological scholarship has moved music transcription down the hierarchy of its concerns, technology has in important ways sown the seeds of its redundancy. The ethnomusicologist Goffredo Plastino allows that a transcription of the music of a folk song, for all its inherent inadequacies, may at least make the transcriber (and the later listener) attend to the piece more carefully and may provide additionally a framework for the song’s better understanding. Transcription, if used at all, he argues, is not so necessary as it once was and may now be regarded as just one bridge between singer and receptor. Given access to a satisfactory recording of the performance, Plastino concludes, ‘the best solution of any description is in words not musical notation’.¹⁶

III: Transcription in this thesis

In this study music notation is presented in one of two ways according to the purpose for which it is used:

1. to illustrate figures, passages or songs where there is accompanying analytical and critical review and where some detailed notation will contribute to the commentary, for example, the songs contained in Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve.

¹⁵ Jeff Todd Titon, ‘Knowing Fieldwork’, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87.

¹⁶ Goffredo Plastino, ‘Transcribing and Stylistic Analysis’, lecture, Music Department, University of Newcastle upon Tyne 24.10.03, personal notes.

2. to represent approximately what the performer sings whilst not attempting to show the nuances of the performance, for example, the songs contained in 'The songs of Jack Beeforth' in Volume II.

In both cases, an accompanying compact disc allows the reader to follow each song whilst listening to it on the appropriate track.

IV: Technical data

The recording equipment used for the Jack Beeforth tapes was a Sony TC – 800B AC 50/60Hz; 6W; DC 1.5V x 8 (a four-speed portable reel-to-reel tape recorder with internal and external microphone facilities).

The recording matrix was 12 micron magnetic polyester recording tape on open reel.

Table Intro.1: Recording details

date	matrix	reel diameter	tape length	recording speed
22.03.74 Friday	EMI Alfonic Low noise	4"/10cm	450'/137m	3.75ips/9.5cm.sec
20.04.74 Saturday	Sony PR-200-5	5"/12.5cm	1200'/370m	7.5ips/19cm.sec
10.05.74 Friday	Sony Pr-200-5	5"/12.5cm	1200'/370m	7.5ips/19cm.sec
22.06.74 Saturday	Sony PR-200-5	5"/12.5cm	1200'/370m	7.5ips/19cm.sec
06.07.74 Saturday	Sony PR-200-5	5"/12.5cm	1200'/370m	3.75ips/9.5cm.sec

The last tape includes notes made after the final visit to Jack Beeforth, 21.09.74 Saturday.

V: Terminology

In this thesis, the preferred term for the description of singers of Jack Beeforth's genre and for the body of songs they sing is 'vernacular'. The imprecision in the term is recognised but its use here is favoured over the alternative terms 'folk', 'traditional' and 'popular', all of which retain yet more serious problems of prescriptiveness and definition. Nevertheless, these three latter epithets often appear throughout the study, for their use has been, and is, commonplace in the wider discourse of this genre.

VI: Abbreviations

<i>EFDSS</i>	English Folk Dance and Song Society
<i>JFSS</i>	Journal of the Folk Song Society
<i>FMJ</i>	Folk Music Journal
<i>JEFDSS</i>	Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society
<i>EDS</i>	English Dance and Song (The magazine of the EFDSS)

VII: Explanatory note

In the pre-decimal system of coinage, 12 pence (12d.) made one shilling (1s.); 20 shillings made a pound (sometimes written as 1l.).

PART ONE

Foreword to Part One

The first part of this thesis locates and interprets the life of Jack Beeforth (1891-1974) within his cultural, social and economic milieu. The motivation and opportunities for Jack's singing are shown to emerge from the interplay of location and landscape, family, work and the rich social networks in which he was embedded.

Earlier penetration into this apparently remote locality, by individuals and by groups, is shown to be a continuing reality, in which external economic forces have produced significant social and cultural change during Jack Beeforth's lifetime.

Part One goes on to examine Jack's attitude to important aspects of songs and singing, and compares his repertoire with those of some other vernacular singers. Finally, in Part One, a configuration of categories for the Beeforth repertoire is determined, and the provenance of the song groupings and their probable routes to his orbit are discussed.

The complete repertoire is set out in Volume II, 'The songs of Jack Beeforth', hereinafter, within the text and for Illustration captions, referred to as 'Songs'.

1

SONGS IN A LANDSCAPE

I: Wragby Farm and the locale

Jack Beeforth was born at Wragby Farm, half way between Whitby and Scarborough, on the North Yorkshire coast in 1891. His recorded repertory of songs, fragments and references, together with the conversations that link them, tell us much about his life. The narrative also contributes to the continuing discourse concerning vernacular song as it examines questions of landscape and topography, remoteness and insularity, the indigenous and the exotic, and of stasis and transition.

Whitby, with its surrounding villages, has always appeared to be something of an outpost; it is distant from main population centres and the local terrain has made travel to it difficult:

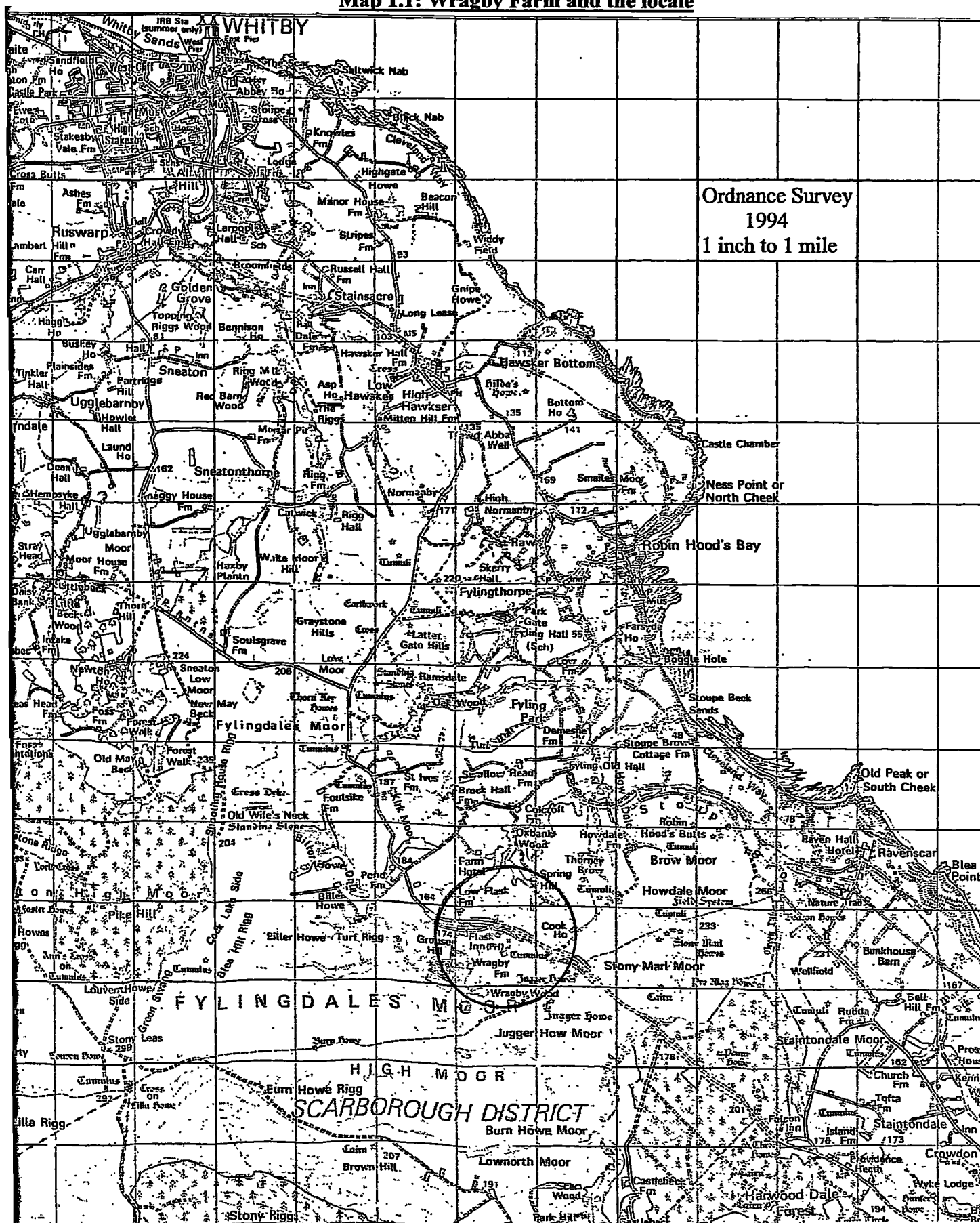
The old town, though regarded with much admiration by the neighbouring villages, and very progressive to the extent of its possibilities, was really only the petty metropolis of a primitive community, shut in by the sea on one side and by wild moorland on the other, satisfied with its local importance and caring little for anything beyond its limits.¹

It was in districts such as this where, Cecil Sharp suggested, ‘the common people form an exceedingly small class ... and are to be found only in those country districts which, by reason of remoteness have escaped the infection of modern ideas’.² Moreover, it was in

¹ Percy S. Jeffrey, *Whitby Lore and Legend* [Whitby: Horne, 1923] (Whitby: Caedmon, 1991), 17.

² Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* [London: Simpkin; Novello, 1907] (London: Mercury, 1965), 3.

Map 1.1: Wragby Farm and the locale



places like this that the remnants of peasant song, country song or folk song (for Sharp the terms were synonymous) might still linger and be harvested. If Sharp, writing in 1907, was right about there then being remote areas still to be found in England, then the Whitby locality would be just the place where, for him, a diligent song collector would be able to find a few gleanings.

The belief that remoteness was the *sine qua non* for a continuing singing tradition to endure is very hard in dying. As Alfred Williams asserted some sixteen years later:

The collecting of folk songs had been carried out in most of the counties before I began the work here [the Upper Thames] ... The opinion was current that this was about the duller part of England. We are an agricultural people here. What had we to do with music and merriment? Far from the large towns and cities ... cut off, as it were, from the heart of the great world, its commerce and civilization, inhabiting a region calmly beautiful ... engaged all their lives upon the soil ... how could the hearts and feelings of the people become quickened ... it was supposed that the people were stupid and ignorant, thick-headed, unmusical and unimaginative – mere clowns and clod-hoppers. I hope we have effectively shattered that illusion. Whatever other counties possess in the manner of folk songs they can scarcely claim to have more materials than have we of the Upper Thames.³

If there is any truth in these conclusions that a district's insularity and remoteness has tended to prevent exotic influences from 'defiling' the indigenous and unchanging local culture, some evidence of this will be found in the Beeforth narrative, and particularly in his song repertory. We might look for themes appearing in the Beeforth corpus which help to locate the songs within his milieu, for if outside factors have largely been excluded from the development of this 'insular' region's singing culture, the songs may have developed from within it. If Jack's universe is truly remote, we may find survivals of what were once more widespread materials, forms and tendencies. We might look, for example, for local topographical references in the songs at the same time recognising that the vernacular singer

³ Alfred Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames* (London: Duckworth, 1923), 25-6.

is often adept at giving deeper meaning and interest to a song by changing, personalising and localising the words in some, perhaps minor, way. A singer will tell of his courting a girl down a locally identifiable lane or taking his horse into a specific local field or wood, by this device claiming ownership of the song not only for that performance but reaffirming ownership for singing to come.

Themes of an agricultural and pastoral nature abound in the Beeforth songs and since Wragby Farm is so near to the North Sea and to Whitby it would be surprising if his repertory were not replete with allusions to the sea, ships and sailors. Importantly though, we should look deeper into the landscape than merely to identify references which may happen to show themselves in the songs. We need to examine the landscape itself and the influence it may have exerted on Jack Beeforth's life and on his songs.

The terrain to the west of Wragby Farm away from the sea is open and inimical to the growing of crops – ideal for hunting, which it has supported since the promotion of the chase by the monks of Rievaulx Abbey in medieval times.⁴ The land between Wragby Farm and the sea has offered the only practical alignments for taking the road linking Whitby and Scarborough, and this has stimulated the growth of settlements between these towns and later the building of the coastal railway, now defunct. The littoral itself has high cliffs and a rocky, shelving shoreline which is extremely hazardous to even the nimblest and most manoeuvrable boat.

The realities of landscape (as Simon Schama later argues) have had as profound an influence in shaping human cultures as those cultures have had in shaping them. The cultural catalyst is the landscape itself; its remoteness or its accessibility may merely serve to modify its *rate* of cultural change. What is clear from the Beeforth narrative is Jack's sense of place

⁴ Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire* (London: Dent, 1972), 128.

which seems to emerge from the landscape in which he lived, and the importance of the social interactions on the farm, at markets, at fairs, at local race meetings, at hunt meets, during and after quoits matches and in his favourite inns: The Flask, The Falcon and The Shepherds' Arms. Geography has, however, both a local and a wider dimension:

It is incontrovertible that individuals do orientate themselves in a socio-spatial manner; in this sense they are community-conscious, and this consciousness may be geographically defined. It remains true that this community orientation should not be studied in isolation and without the broader social structure in which it is set ... We should thus focus on the dialectical interplay between national and local in terms of interdependence, orientation, organisation, and distribution of power and resources.⁵

Landscapes, claims Schama, are culture before they are nature.

It is clear that inherited landscape myths and memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with. National identity, to take just the most obvious example, would lose most of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition; its topography mapped, elaborated and enriched as a homeland. The famous Shakespeare eulogy of the 'sceptred isle', invokes cliff-girt insularity as patriotic identity ... devotees of nature myths were not just a motley collection of eccentrics rambling down memory lane. Each one believed that an understanding of landscape's past tradition was a source of illumination for the present and future. That conviction made them less antiquarians than historians, or even prophets or politicians. They waxed passionate about their favourite places because they could redeem the harshness of contemporary life ... So many of our modern concerns – empire, nation, freedom, enterprise and dictatorship – have worked topography to give their ruling ideas a natural form.⁶

A faint echo of this Schama passage is found in an insightful and affective rationale for the development of the post second world-war Folk Song Revival in England:

What is sought in songs of past times we have never personally known is a sense of identity in relation to difference with what has gone before. Continuity is established with those who produced these songs in a way of life long disappeared, and this produces a way of assimilating the transformations that have endlessly ensued. What is provided may be a source of

⁵ Michael Pickering and Tony Green, 'Towards a Cartography of the Vernacular Milieu', *Everyday Culture: Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), 11.

⁶ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana, 1996), 15-18.

compensatory meaning for our own feelings of loss, violation and anxiety about our own place in the historical process, but what is also involved is a way of negotiating that process through a counter process of traditionalisation, which so often serves to make a deficient 'now' unequal to a sanctified 'then'. While these identifications may be partially or wholly delusory, the feelings that generate them are not.⁷

If landscape and songs are both cultural artefacts overlain with traditional perspectives, it does not follow that we may assume that their meanings or values have remained constant through the years; they have been, and still are, worked on by the imperatives of the successive generations who have lived with them. Here Schama and Pickering/Green are looking to the balm of tradition to give sense and meaning to a now diminished cultural life. Jack Beeforth was no revivalist and he had no concept of the term 'folk song'. He had been singing to audiences from a very early age and any feelings of nostalgia for earlier times were regrets at the passing of real, lived experiences which he remembered with evident happiness and pride, not for an imagined, sentimentalised and idealised past induced by loss of landscape, for in his locale landscapes had remained relatively unchanged. The Flask Inn was, for Jack, part of this unchanging domain:

I sang [this song] when I was nine year old [1900] at Flask Sports ... Aye my father wanted me to sing. There was a bit of a sing-song, you know. You could go in them [pubs] in them days any time – bairns – couldn't you. And I had to stand on t' table and sing. Bah gum, the tanners and bobs [sixpences and shillings] I've had. Folks threw 'em on t' table, you know.⁸

Song:⁹ It Was Early in the Spring

It was early in the spring when the birds began to sing
That was the time that I tried to win the heart of a damsel fair
Her cheeks were as red as the berries that grows
Would you suppose each morning she rose

⁷ Pickering and Green, *Everyday Culture*, 31.

⁸ In taped conversation with the author: Jack Beeforth. 9 Orchard Road, Sleights. 10 May 1974.

⁹ The complete Beeforth versions of this and other songs appearing within the text are to be found in Volume II, 'The songs of Jack Beeforth'.

Tripping along on her neat little toes
Gath'ring wild flowers to sell-o.

Chorus

*Tripping along the green each morning she was seen
With a basket on her arm filled with roses
And if you feel inclined to ask her where she's been
She'll tell you she's been gathering wild roses.*

II: Remoteness and insularity

The ambivalence in the idea of remoteness here is exemplified by the siting of Whitby and its locality: apparently difficult to approach from landward yet open to the sea from a sheltered harbour. One questions whether remoteness as a concept could properly be applied to the Whitby locality at all during the past three hundred years. There was an early track which ran to this district: the Roman 'Wade's Causeway' which connected the signal station at Goldsborough a few kilometres north of Whitby with Malton nearly sixty kilometres to the south. The dotted lines of its alignment are still shown on the ordnance survey maps but its metalling foundations have gone, plundered by successive generations for their own needs, and its use as an important road ended centuries ago. Shaw Jeffrey has suggested that the gradual development of marshy flats around the immediate environs of Whitby as the Esk estuary silted up increased the difficulty of access on the landward side.¹⁰ The difficulties of approaching Whitby by the moors are further exacerbated not so much from the height of the surrounding hills (between 260 – 290 metres at Aislaby and Sleights respectively) as from the gradients: ascending Blue Bank past the Plough Inn outside Sleights imposes on the traveller an average gradient of almost 10% for almost a kilometer, with a steepest incline of almost 20%. When negotiating these almost precipitous and winding roads even in a modern

¹⁰ Jeffrey, *Whitby Lore and Legend*, 3.

vehicle it is easy to imagine how difficult and hazardous it must have been for carters and packmen to ply their business between Whitby and the hinterland. Travellers who have tried to use the single width paved ‘Monks’ Trod’ footpaths which have crossed the locality since medieval times knows that they are impassable, even if detectable, in wintry weather.

Good roads were late in coming to these parts. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, connecting Whitby by land with the world beyond the moors to Pickering and Guisborough were horse wynds – a single row of flagstones no more than half a metre wide. The only road in regular use was that opened in 1759 to Saltersgate, fifteen kilometres from Whitby over the moors towards Pickering. This was the Salt Road over which packhorses carried salt from the Cheshire mines for use in the preserving of much of the fish landed in Whitby. Around the villages were cart tracks, two ruts with grass between.¹¹

About half way between Whitby and Scarborough the narrow and winding A171 road crosses the foot of Fylingdales Moor between the Flask Inn and Wragby Farm. Here the landscape over to the right has gradually climbed to the top of the moor where it has risen to almost 300 metres, five uninhabited and uncultivated kilometres distant. A traveller riding a horse west from Wragby Farm might not see a house for thirty kilometres until reaching Westerdale. On the left the land falls further, over the Stoupe Brow (Stow Brow) escarpment with its scattered farmhouses, to the North Sea four kilometres away, and a little further north to Robin Hood’s Bay. The ‘local’ content in the Beeforth repertory becomes immediately apparent. ‘Songs and ballads with a generalised content’, writes Michael Pickering, ‘[can] in varying ways be fitted to the shape of the images of a local world, particularised, given outline and colour from persons and places close by, rather than more completely from the

¹¹ John Tindale, *Owlers, Hoverers and Revenue Men* (Whitby: Whitby Publishers, 1986), 37.
Note: In local usage ‘Fylingdale’ and ‘Fylingdales’ are both accepted terms.

imagination.’¹² Some of the Beeforth locales, though, are more specific and concrete than Pickering here suggests. The locations of the following pair of songs, particularly in the extracts shown, are precisely identified though versions of them may have originally been attached to songs floated in from elsewhere:

Song:¹³ **Willie Went to Westerdale**

Willie went to Westerdale, *hi do a dandy*
Willie went to Westerdale, *clash clash ma clandy*
He went to Westerdale and took a wife
He’d better by half had ta’en his life
Singerlera mote tackeramanya.

He bought her twenty good milk kie, *hi do a dandy*
He bought her twenty good milk kie
Nineteen of them she let gan dry
Singerlera mote tackeramanya.

Locality is further emphasised in ‘Willie Went to Westerdale’ by Jack Beeforth’s use of phonological and lexical elements of dialect which also emphasise the humour of the song. The second song of this pair, ‘Stow Brow’, brings in a feature of landscape which could scarcely be more ‘local’ to Wragby Farm where Jack was born.

Song:¹⁴ **Stow Brow**

In Stow Brow in Stow Brow a damsel did dwell
She loved a brave young sailor and he lovèd her as well
He promised he would marry her when back he did return
But mark what misfortunes all on them befell.

From the top of Stow Brow she came down to the sand
With the tearing of her hair and the wringing of her hands
Crying oh you cruel billows come throw my love on shore
So that I might be beholding his features once more.

¹² Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture: A Study Based on the Blunt Collection of Song from Adderbury, North Oxfordshire* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 21.

¹³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights. 10 May 1974.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1974.

As she was a-walking from Stow Brow to Bay
She spied a drowned sailor all on the sands he lay
She boldly stepped up to him and amazingly she did stand
For she knew that it was her own true love by the mark on his right hand.

In Robin Hood's Bay churchyard this couple they doth lay
And for a memorandum there's a headstone at their heads
And all you loving couples who passed by this way
Will you kindly shed a tear for the couple that's laid there.

These two songs are heavily laced with local references. If their origins lie outside this locality then they clearly have been doctored to suit local sentiment. However, many more of the Beeforth songs are not textually local except where slightly modified, as Michael Pickering has described earlier; the repertory as a whole, therefore, is to be seen as not being anecdotally charged but as having an objective and universalist perspective, which allows the repertory to be considered as distinctive but not narrowly constrained.

The landscape close to Wragby Farm is austere and a sense of remoteness prevails. To read many of the finger-posts and place names surrounding Wragby or to look at a contemporary ordnance survey map is to have this perception of isolation, of exoticism intensified: Lilla Howe, Broxa Moor, Bloody Beck, Silpho, Jugger Moor, Helwath Beck, Boggle Hole and Blea Wyke Point. These Anglo-Saxon survivals on the very edge of the later Danish and Norwegian settlements resonate in this area;¹⁵ they have been noted by many visitors, one of whom described the hamlet of Staintondale, six kilometres from Wragby:

I shall not sound a fanfare of trumpets for Staintondale though it is a pleasant unspoilt village. It straggles. It has a rural forge and The Shepherds' Arms ... it was once a manor of the Knights Templars. It has the Staintondale pack, and is an excellent jumping-off place for an excursion into the wilderness ... The land is not merely wild, it is Beowulfian.¹⁶

¹⁵ H R Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* [1962] (London: Longman, 1991), 56.

¹⁶ Oswald Harland, *Yorkshire North Riding* (London: Robert Hale, 1951), 55.

The Shepherds' Arms at Staintondale was one of Jack Beeforth's favourite singing pubs. We need look no further than Staintondale to show how local references can be used to accommodate songs which have a far wider currency – to personalise, give deeper meaning and added humour to them, as in the following song extract, which again carries strong traces of local dialect usage:

Song:¹⁷ **Cold Stringy Pie**

Oh there was an aud farmer in Staintondale did dwell
They called him Dickie Adamson you all know him well
He gave to his servants cold stringy pie
And without any sweetening that's not a lie
To me fol the diddle I doh fol the diddle dee.

And as for his hosses they were all very thin
You could count every bane they had in their skin
There was three lame in t'leg and fower swung in t'back
And he learned 'em to gan with a whistle and a crack ...

There was threshing by steam and water for to lead
Took yan for to drive another for to feed
Two up aboon and three doon below
Some makking forkfuls others stacking straw ...

'Cold Stringy Pie' is a song with an universal theme which is perfectly suited to adaptation and particularisation. Roy Palmer used a version, which this present writer had noted in 1965 in York, in his collection *A Touch on the Times*, which has the location changed to 'Yorkshire', and the recalcitrant farmer named as 'Yaddy Hughes'. Palmer writes:

The old system which Cobbett was lamenting in the 1820s and 1830s was that poor farm workers should live in with the farmer and his family. This Yorkshire song indicates that the system continued into the later nineteenth century in some parts of England. It also indicates the disadvantage that farm workers who lived in were even more at the mercy of their employers than their fellows in industry. Such songs would be likely to get a hearing on

¹⁷ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights. 20 April 1974.

occasions like the hiring fairs when the labourers got together to discuss their masters.¹⁸

Such songs would also be used when the farmers of Staintondale poked fun at each other. At Wragby Farm, workers lived in well into the twentieth century, although only two non-family full-time workers were ever employed at one time. They did so very happily according to Jack Beeforth's daughter, Ethel Pearson, the sons of neighbouring farmers often preferring Wragby to home and migrant workers often staying on well after their contractual period.¹⁹

A certain John Cole, described variously as 'an excellent specimen of topographical correspondent', and 'as mad as Dick's hatband and as thrang [busy] as Thrap's wife', was clearly impressed by the landscape between Harwood Dale (where Jack Beeforth's wife, Hannah, came from) and Wragby Farm (where the Beeforths lived for much of their married life).²⁰ Writing nearly two hundred years ago and offering a presentiment to Schama, Cole concluded ...

The scenery possesses all that wild and remote character so peculiar to the Yorkshire moors; frowning as it were, in wrath at their own desolation and dreariness and deserted by the human race. Not so once: cast your eyes around, and everywhere you behold relics like the ruins of a former world, of a people long since mingled with the dust.²¹

The population hereabouts is sparse; there are still no more than ten or twelve farmhouses within two kilometres of the Flask. The inn has served as an important social focus for the few families who lived in the vicinity, and the pub regulars would often have found themselves drinking with the transient passing trade that has been the Flask's economic

¹⁸ Roy Palmer, (ed.), *A Touch on the Times: Songs of Social Change 1770-1914* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1974), 235.

¹⁹ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Gail Agar, David & Ali Hillery, 53 High Street, Burniston. 9 May 2000.

²⁰ Harland, *Yorkshire North Riding*, 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

lifeline. Jack Beeforth, according to his daughter Ethel, was usually 'a three gill man' when he went down for a drink, usually to the Flask. In any case throughout the whole of his life she had never seen him drunk, only sometimes 'a bit market-fresh'.²² Clearly the conviviality and the singing opportunities were the attraction for Jack.

III: Accessibility and penetration

Improvements in road communications developed only slowly and incrementally here. The Saltersgate road opened in 1759; the York 'Diligence' service 1788; the Sunderland stagecoach service 1789; the Stockton stagecoach service 1814.²³ From seaward, however, Whitby has long been accessible. Shaw Jeffrey's comments may owe more to the imaginative interpretation of his own observation than to any scientific method, but he may be right when he concludes:

Whitby is in a sense, more cosmopolitan than any other town in Yorkshire. In bygone days, many ship-wrecked sailors from overseas must have found a home in the red-roofed houses which climb over each other's backs in their attempt to reach the abbey; a Whitby skipper must have brought back with him a dark-eyed foreign bride to rear her brood of pretty children at the quay side of the old port. And so we still see many foreign types among the faces of the children that throng Hagersgate and Church Street.²⁴

Whitby had never been a backwater of stability, unchanging and unaffected by the outside world. The population of the town had grown, between 1714 and 1830, from 5000 to 12000 as the success of its shipbuilding and ancillary industries, such as sail making, sucked in workers from nearby farms, and from other shipbuilding and maritime centres farther afield. By the end of the nineteenth century Whitby was the ninth port of importance in Britain, a

²² Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson et al., Burniston. 21 November 2000.

²³ Jeffrey, *Whitby Lore and Legend*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

busy place and an important market for agricultural products grown in the area, and for the jet industry; isolated it was certainly not.²⁵

The coming of the railway age saw the further easing of accessibility to the Whitby area this time from the landward side; a through line to Pickering was in use as early as 1836 (albeit using on the Grosmont-Goathland section a crude system of pulleys operated by a wheeled water tank). By 1885, Whitby was so well served by railways that it had no fewer than four outlets: to Malton, Stockton, Saltburn and Scarborough, providing cheap and regular services for quarries, iron ore and alum mines, and farm produce.²⁶ A new class of day-tripper and holiday maker was spawned. The Scarborough and Whitby Railway's Official Guide for its service which opened in 1885 actually makes a virtue of the once-forbidding countryside between the two towns:

The Scarborough and Whitby line has opened out the country and made it accessible in all its virgin loveliness. The line runs through pleasant undulating pasture lands at either end, winds in and out amongst the gorse and heather-clad hills, dips into wooded dales, skirts the edges of a wild moor, climbs the highest cliff on the Yorkshire coast, runs round one of the bonniest bays in the Kingdom, and over a portion of its course is perched on the brow of a cliff against which the waves ceaselessly break.²⁷

Whitby and its environs was once again being re-invented – this time as a holiday resort. In Whitby, impresarios began to provide exotic entertainment for the crowds of holiday makers and locals importing a new way of 'infecting' the indigenous culture, offering such programmes as the following:

²⁵ John Tindale, *Owlers, Hoverers and Revenue Men*, 5-6.

²⁶ Jeffrey, *Whitby Lore and Legend*, 10-15.

²⁷ K Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain: Volume 4, The North East* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1978), 87.

St. Hilda's Hall Whitby
TONIGHT (Friday) and TOMORROW (Saturday)
March 18th and 19th 1887
Original
COURT MINSTRELS
TWENTY FIVE IN NUMBER
En Costume George II
In their
NEW & SPARKLING PROGRAMME
Of Refined
NEGRO MINSTRELSY & COMICALITIES
Consisting of
New and Pathetic ballads, Quartettes, Operatic
Selections, Comic, Songs, Amusing Anecdotes
Original Burlesques, Dances & &
The troupe is accompanied by a superb
STRING & BRASS BAND²⁸

This run of only two performances by a troupe of this size suggests the operation of 'characteristic symptoms of monopolisation [which] can be seen in the reorganisation of music hall as early as the 1880s; corporate ownership, national and regional syndicates and chains'²⁹ as the company moved on to Scarborough and Bridlington. The attendant commodification and homogenisation of this music as product should not be seen as a qualitative shift in the cultural performer/audience relationship in the performance of song, but rather as a continuum, for pub singers and fellow-drinkers would feel quite at home in a lively music hall. As Pickering and Green have argued, 'Performers in vernacular milieux have been ... directly accountable to their listeners, in non-market terms, and their listeners more able to give immediate response in terms of evaluation and appreciation ... The resilience of effective consumer power in the nineteenth century music hall should be noted.'³⁰ This phenomenon is prevalent yet in the working men's clubs of northern England,

²⁸ *Whitby Gazette*, 19 March 1887.

²⁹ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 14.

³⁰ Pickering and Green, *Everyday Culture*, 16.

where artists who are perceived by the audiences not to have performed well during their first ‘spot’, may be ‘paid off’ during the interval by the club secretary.

Britain’s railways had not been constructed by machines but by the muscle power of armies of navvies, ‘that anarchic labouring elite who worked in constant danger miles from civilisation [who] lived according to their own laws’.³¹ Commenting on the railway navvies’ penchant for inventing nicknames and tortuously elaborated rhyming-slang, Terry Coleman writes:

You might think that men who spoke such a flourishing lingo of their own and showed such a gift for words, might also have had many worksongs but it seems there were few – spectators often remarked on the concentrated silence as a gang of navvies got down to their work – and those few have disappeared. The one navvy song I have been able to find [Drill ye tarriers, drill] comes not from Britain but from America, where it was bellowed by Irishmen as they pressed on across the continent. Probably the truth is that there were songs, but they were considered unprintable and were lost.³²

Coleman is here unnecessarily pessimistic, for many thematic and episodic songs have been noted in Britain which recount the days of the great building programmes of both the canal network and the railways: there are nine such songs in Roy Palmer’s *Strike the Bell*,³³ and three more in the same author’s edited selections *A Touch on the Times*,³⁴ and *The Sound of History*.³⁵ Seeger and MacColl included an English version of the song ‘Poor Paddy works on the railway’, in *The Singing Island*.³⁶ This, though, is almost to miss the important point in identifying the influence of external factors in shaping the ever-changing culture of Jack Beeforth’s locality. The railway navvies were drawn from all the regions of the British Isles

³¹ Terry Coleman, *The Railway Navvies: A history of the men who made the railways* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 21.

³² *Ibid.*, 139.

³³ Roy Palmer, *Strike the Bell: transport by road, canal, rail and sea in the nineteenth century through songs, ballads and contemporary accounts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 18–48.

³⁴ Roy Palmer, *A Touch on the Times*, 40–43.

³⁵ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 88–9.

³⁶ Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl, *The Singing Island: A collection of English and Scots Folksongs* (London: Mills Music, 1960), 37.

and would carry with them their own cultural baggage: beliefs and mores, rituals and customs, speechways and songs all of which would quickly become modified. Navvies were herded together, often with their families, under sub-contracting gangers with perhaps three thousand men working on a five-mile stretch of line. Songs would not only be about navvying but would be drawn from their individual and collective memories – songs they brought with them from home. It would be surprising if some of these songs were not performed in the houses, streets and taverns of the locality in which they would spend many months before moving on to the next stretch of line.

The navvies and the seasonal agricultural labourers, particularly from Ireland, who had come to help with the harvest were the likely source of many of the songs in the country singer's repertory. Wragby Farm was accessible enough in the early twentieth century to be visited by Irish farm workers looking for employment. Jack Beeforth recounts his father's rudimentary but swift and effective selection procedure and its aftermath when two mates applied for a single vacancy at their farm:

We had two come one day, and my father said that they had to go into t'field, like and turn a bit of hay to see which shaped best. It was an Irishman. By gum, he could go. And he gave his mate [who had to tramp on] all his things he had – tin to boil his water in, sugar and tea and sike like ... He was a good chap.³⁷

So good was he in fact that according to Jack this particular man, unusually, remained at the farm for seven or eight years: 'I think he'd run away from home or had been turned out or summat. Because there was one night we was sat ower t'fire and talking and he started to cry. I said "What's t'matter James?" and he said "Only the bloody thoughts", and that's all he would tell us.'³⁸ Shared leisure time such as this would give opportunities to exchange not

³⁷ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 6 July 1974.

³⁸ Ibid.

only confidences but stories and songs, at least one of which, ‘They Dare Not Do It Now’, found its way into the Beeforth repertory.

Song:³⁹ **They Dare Not Do It Now**

I was born in Tipperary when I was quiet [sic] young
Aye and that’s the reason I suppose there’s blarney on me tongue
I was the picture of me daddy all the neighbours did allow
And the girls all ran to kiss me but they daresn’t do that now.

Chorus

*Oh they dare not do it now. Oh they dare not do it now
Oh the girls all ran to kiss me and I wish they would do that now.*

A version of this song entitled ‘I Wish They’d Do It Now’ was noted in the old East Riding of Yorkshire by Steve Gardham, who writes that it was: ‘most likely brought over to the East Riding by the seasonal agricultural labourers from Ireland. Starting in the early nineteenth century they came to help with the harvest and this lasted up to the 1920s.’⁴⁰ According to Roy Palmer the tune was used for a broadside ballad promoting land redistribution circa 1886 called ‘Three Acres and a Cow’.⁴¹

We have seen how the apparent seclusion of Whitby and the surrounding moorland area has been constantly breached during the last three hundred years, and how vernacular forms of popular culture have been introduced through oral transmission. ‘In Britain print has been a normal tradition for folk song texts ever since the sixteenth century’, wrote A. L. Lloyd when discussing this process of orality. ‘Normal, too, has been the busy traffic of words and tunes between town and country, not merely by means of street and fairground singers, but

³⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 March 1974.

⁴⁰ Steve Gardham, *An East Riding Songster: A selection of folk-song from the East Riding* (Lincoln and Hull: Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts, 1982), 20.

⁴¹ Roy Palmer, *The Painful Plough: a portrait of the agricultural labourer in the nineteenth century from folk songs and ballads and contemporary accounts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 60-3.

also by travelling showmen, fit-up theatre companies, pleasure garden singers and the like.’⁴²

The oral and vernacular forms of song were not the only artistic textual product available on the streets according to this Whitby Gazette Police Court Report of July 1890:

A MUSICAL COMPOSER ACTING AS A PEDLAR

Rebecca Heinmeier, known as Madame Heinmeier, of respectable appearance, was charged with acting as a pedlar without a certificate. Acting-Sergeant Dobson said he found defendant in Silver Street selling a copy of her song to Mrs Winterburn. Witness asked her if she had a certificate and she said no. Defendant had been hawking copies of a song which she said was her own composition.⁴³

Though some of Jack Beeforth’s songs carry a perceived local flavour, the narratives of most of them bear universal themes. Frank Kidson’s collection of mainly Yorkshire and Lowland songs, *Traditional Tunes*, was published in 1891, the year Jack Beeforth was born. ‘Before easy means of transit existed’, Kidson wrote, ‘the songs of a countryside remained unaltered for a great length of time, and people delighted to sing songs which were venerable with age. Now however, cheap trips to the larger towns enabled the country lad to compete with the town’s boy in his knowledge of popular musical favourites’.⁴⁴ The song Kidson used to illustrate in the book’s Preface that tradition is ‘wonderfully accurate’ and to show ‘the tenacity with which certain tunes have held together while transmitted orally’ was ‘The Banks of Sweet Dundee’. Jack Beeforth had this song in his repertory and his substantial version appears to support Kidson’s case. Jack had not learned it from *Traditional Tunes* which he had not heard of; neither is it likely that the person he learned it from had taken it from that book. Yet here is the song again recorded from Jack over eighty years after the publication of *Traditional Tunes* with the words and tune hardly altered. Jack, though, puts in

⁴² A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 26.

⁴³ *Whitby Gazette*, 4 July 1890.

⁴⁴ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes: A Collection of Ballad Airs, Chiefly Obtained in Yorkshire and the South of Scotland; Together with Their Appropriate Words from Broadsides and from Oral Tradition* (Oxford: Charles Taphouse, 1891), xii.

two additional verses (3 and 4) exactly where Kidson has indicated ellipsis by a string of asterisks: 'Two verses which are not essential to the story have been omitted. There is enough tragedy and injured innocence in the ballad to furnish the plot of a penny novelette.' The Jack Beeforth and Frank Kidson versions of the text of 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' are set out below:

The Beeforth version ⁴⁵

It's of a farmer's daughter so beautiful I'm told
Her parents died and left her five hundred pounds in gold
She livèd with her uncle the cause of all her woe
You soon shall hear this maiden fair did prove her overthrow.

The Kidson version ⁴⁶

It's of a farmer's daughter so beautiful I'm told
Her father died and left her five hundred pounds in gold
She lived with her uncle the cause of all her woe
But you soon shall hear this maiden fair did prove his overthrow.

Now her uncle had a ploughboy young Mary loved full well
And in her uncle's garden their tales of love would tell
There was a wealthy squire he oft came her to see
But still she loved her ploughboy on the banks of sweet Dundee.

Her uncle had a ploughboy young Mary loved full well
And in her uncle's garden their tales of love they'd tell
But there was a wealthy squire who oft came her to see
But still she loved her ploughboy on the banks of sweet Dundee.

It was on one summer's morning her uncle went straightway
He rappèd on her bedroom door and he this to her did say
Come rise up pretty Mary a lady you may be
For the squire is waiting for you on the banks of sweet Dundee.

[verse 3 omitted from Kidson's version]

Why a fig for all your squires your lords and dukes likewise
Young William's hand appears to me like diamonds in my eyes
Be gone unruly female you ne'er shall happy be
For I mean to banish William from the banks of sweet Dundee.

[verse 4 omitted from Kidson's version]

Now her uncle and that squire rode out one summer's morn
Young William he's in favour her uncle he did say
Indeed it's my intention to tie him to a tree
Or else I'll bribe the pressgang on the banks of sweet Dundee.

⁴⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

⁴⁶ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 54-5.

Her uncle and the squire rode out one summer's day
Young William is in favour her uncle he did say
In deed 'tis my intention to tie him to a tree
Or else to bribe the press-gang on the banks of sweet Dundee.

And the pressgang came to William when he was all alone
He boldly fought for liberty but they was three to one
The blood it flow in turrents come kill me now says he
I'd rather die for Mary on the banks of sweet Dundee.

*The press-gang came to William when he was all alone
He boldly fought for liberty but there were six to one
The blood did flow in torrents pray kill me now said he
I would rather die for Mary on the banks of sweet Dundee.*

Next morn this maid was walking lamenting for her love
She met that wealthy squire down in her uncle's grove
He threw his arms around her stand back base man said she
You've sent the only man I love from the banks of sweet Dundee.

*This maid one day was walking lamenting for her love
She met the wealthy squire down in her uncle's grove
He put his arms around her stand off base man said she
You sent the only lad I love from the banks of sweet Dundee.*

And he threw his arms around her waist and tried to throw her down
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning gown
Young Mary took the weapons the sword she used so free
And she did fire and shoot that squire on the banks of sweet Dundee.

*He clasped his arms around her and tried to throw her down
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning gown
Young Mary took the pistols and the sword he used so free
But she did fire and shot the squire on the banks of sweet Dundee.*

And her uncle he overheard the noise and he hastened to the ground
Since you have killed that squire I'll give you your death wound
Stand back then said young Mary undaunted I will be
The trigger she drew and her uncle slew on the banks of sweet Dundee.

*Her uncle overheard the noise and hastened to the ground
O since you've killed the squire I'll give you your death wound
Stand off then young Mary said undaunted I will be
The trigger drew and her uncle slew on the banks of sweet Dundee.*

Now the doctor he was sent for a man of noted skill
And likewise came a lawyer for him to make his will
He willed his gold to Mary who fought so manfully
And now she lives quite happy on the banks of sweet Dundee.

*A doctor soon was sent for a man of noted skill
Likewise came his lawyer for him to sign his will
He left his gold to Mary who fought so manfully
And closed his eyes no more to rise on the banks of sweet Dundee.*

It is clear from Kidson's comments and expurgations throughout *Traditional Tunes* that he had no love for the words of many of the eighty three titles he included in the book. 'A fine and sterling old air. I wish I could say as much for the words', 'verses so deficient in rhyme or reason as not to be worth the trouble of transcription', 'another lugubrious ditty', and 'sublime doggerel' when not 'grandiloquent language' speak of very heavy mediation in Kidson's collecting and selection.⁴⁷ Few general readers, Kidson knew, would have read this book for it was published in a subscriber's edition of only two hundred copies and became a rare book from the moment of its publication.⁴⁸

Jack Beeforth was a man of his place. He rarely travelled far. For him the local landscape around Wragby Farm within which he lived all his life provided him with the challenges of wresting a living and the context for his socialising and his singing. These recordings were made when he was, as we now know, on his deathbed, so we can only imagine what a true Beeforth performance was like; when we are looking for contextual insights in the recordings we may learn as much from listening to what happens between the songs as from the songs themselves.

Most of the recorded Beeforth repertory is part of a corpus of song widely spread throughout England. The songs which Jack and any singer in his vernacular tradition sings, are expressed in a form which relies, whenever it is sung, on the singer's (and the listeners') attitudes, their views on the songs' meaning and function, and the place that it holds in their lives. It seems clear that for Jack Beeforth, recorded when he was near the end of his life, the attitudes, meanings and functions inherent in his songs were to a retrospective, now displaced milieu, illuminating not a present truth but one that was now spent.

⁴⁷ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 139, 134, 130, 53, 57.

⁴⁸ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes* [1891] (Wakefield: S R Publishers, 1970), new Forward xvi.

2

SONGS FROM A LIFE

I: Introduction

Jack Beeforth lived all of his life in the narrow strip between Whitby and Scarborough hemmed in to the west by the climbing North Yorkshire moors and to the east by the North Sea – a sparsely populated territorial ribbon of no more than thirty kilometres by five. He never lived outside this locality. His songs need to be seen in the context of his life and work in this area. The pre-eminently local perspective in interpreting cultural meaning – family, immediate social groupings, work patterns and relationships, class structures, ethnic homogeneity – might almost persuade us to look no further than the Whitby/Scarborough corridor to find the important cultural influences in Jack's life. However, studies concentrating on the local and particular, Pickering and Green have cautioned, 'can involve the ... grave dangers of anecdotalism, sentimentalisation and escapism. To avoid these it is necessary constantly to incorporate such studies into a general framework of theory', including such universalist trends in modern society as 'mass production, social mobility, mass communication, consumerism and housing patterns'.¹ This study recognises these important concerns.

¹ Michael Pickering and Tony Green, *Everyday Culture*, 7.

Jacks's father, then his son, had the adjoining farm, and his wife and daughter (before she was married) worked at Wragby, his own farm. Neighbours of his class and their families, farming similar terrains, laboured under the same economic strictures (and often the same landlord); local farm workers not permanently employed on a particular farm provided a pool of 'flexible' casual labour, as well as an information network across the locality. Leisure time, for the men at least, was enjoyed at the pubs in the centre of the region at Flask, Harwood Dale and Staintondale, and for example at quoits matches, hunt meets and agricultural shows. In a largely ethnically homogeneous area such as this, 'alienness' would consist of someone speaking with a West Riding dialect, although it has already been shown that the area has had a continuing history of external influences upon it.

II: Quoiting

Jack Beeforth's competitive nature made him, when he was active, participate in almost any local diversion when rivalry could be engaged: horse racing, hunting, foot racing, singing competitions, hedging- and ploughing-matches, dominoes and quoits. His blacksmithing skills were useful in making rudimentary quoits for practising in the barn on wet Sundays. He could shoe his own horses: 'Why, I taught myself, I had an uncle a blacksmith', and he had no trouble in fashioning a set of quoits. As to his skills at the game of quoits itself, Jack sounded as confident as ever: 'Oh, aye. We used to play quoits. I won two copper kettles yah [one] week. We were bad [hard] to beat, me and my brother-in-law. My God, we were bad to beat.'²

² Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

Quoits was, and to a lesser extent still is, an important social game in this area of North Yorkshire. Pub landlords had realised the opportunities of increasing trade when it was at the height of its popularity in the late nineteenth century, and quoits pitches were prepared on ground adjoining many of their premises; most pitches are still attached to pubs. Several clubs still compete in the local Quoits League with matches throughout May, June and July to take advantage of the long summer evenings. Individual challenge matches are still arranged. The number and composition of quoits teams reflects the now greatly diminished farm populations. Teams in the 1850s had twelve members, before World War 2, eleven, and nowadays nine. By the 1970s the number of teams in the Danby and District League was down to nine where it still hovers.³ Pubs are an important part of quoiting, for most participants and spectators drift into them after the games, but the singing that used to be *de rigueur* has now almost disappeared. Each individual quoits evening was in Jack Beeforth's day an opportunity to socialise, play, drink and sing. Keith Sullivan, who attended some quoiting occasions in the 1970s, commented on the singing: 'although a good song is appreciated, the contribution of an *attempt* at singing is as important as the singing itself, and it seems that the attempt to sing is an indication by the singer that he willing to take part in the communal event'.⁴ The songs which were sung after quoits were most eclectic. Jack learned for example, the song 'The Hat my Father Wore': 'Oh, you know, going about to sports and singing at 'em, quoiting and sike like'.⁵

³ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 131.

⁴ K. F. Sullivan, *Popular Singing Traditions and Cultural Change in the old North Riding of Yorkshire* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1978), 139.

⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

Song:⁶ **The Hat my Father Wore**

Now fine Paddy was an Irish boy I've just come home from sea
For singing and for dancing I think I can please ye
I can sing and dance with any man as I did in the days of yore
On St Patrick's Day I long to wear the hat my father wore.

Chorus

*Sure it's old and it's beautiful the finest ever was seen
It was worn for more than ninety year in that little isle so green
It was worn by Dan O'Connor, Robert Emmet and Tom Moore
Was the relics of all daycency the hat my father wore.*

Jack Beeforth's verses follow very closely those of Johnny Patterson, the Irishman who wrote the original (as well as such songs as 'The Garden Where the Praties Grow' and 'A Good Roaring Fire').⁷ Because the words of the verses are unremarkable and do not contain much humour, a little stage-Irishness and refer to the condition of emigration and loss (though with little poignancy), it is difficult immediately to see what significance the song had for Jack. Its good 'Come all ye' opening promises entertainment in store, and its long and catchy chorus would make it a successful piece to start off a singing session. English singers and audiences seem curiously attached to an Irish lyric containing the word 'decency' which they inevitably and with gusto pronounce 'daycency'. Here Jack does not disappoint. His performance does not use the song as a vehicle for an anti-Irish 'Oirish' caricature in which some may try to depict Paddy as funny, quaint, quarrelsome, charmingly irresponsible or stupidly dangerous. He may have known too many real, hard-working Irishmen for that stereotype to take hold with him. It is likely that the song had been taken from one of the migratory seasonal agricultural labourers, who also passed on the parodied chorus, in which the hat becomes a metaphor for the handing, down the generations, of nationalist political

⁶ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

⁷ Martin A. Walton (ed.), *Walton's Treasury of Irish Songs and Ballads* (Dublin: Walton, 1947), 105.

beliefs. Patterson's bland 'From my father's great ancestors/It's descended with galore', is changed to include references to leading figures in the nineteenth century Irish political and cultural landscape: Dan O'Connor, conflating Daniel O'Connell (the great figure in early nineteenth century Ireland's Catholic Emancipation movement, died 1847) with Fergus O'Connor (the Physical Force Party Chartist, died 1855), Robert Emmet (leader of the 1803 Dublin Insurrection, died 1803) and Thomas Moore (writer of, inter alia, 'Irish Melodies' and fellow student of Emmet though hardly a revolutionary himself, died 1852).

The tenacity of these names is remarkable. Had he been aware, Jack Beeforth may have been uncomfortable singing about Irish revolutionary heroes, particularly during periods of IRA bombing activities in World War 2, when farmers like him were an important element on the Home Front. The song is easily parodied. Under the guise 'The Sash my Father Wore' it has long been associated with the Northern Irish Orange movement and the Nationalist figures are replaced by scenes of Orange victories: Derry, Aughrim, Enniskillen, the Boyne.⁸ Clearly Jack was not persuaded to parody any of his local dignitaries, and as he passed from quoits pitch to public bar he may have missed all the implications and references in 'The Hat my Father Wore' – which may often have been his first song of the night. Jack Beeforth has now gone, as have many of the quoiting venues he used to play at, but the interest of quoits around Whitby endures.⁹

⁸ Richard Hayward, *The Orange Sash* (London: Fontana TFL5069, 1956).

⁹ *Durham Advertiser*, 15 July 2004, 4. 'Dozens of quoits players competed in a World Championship at Beamish Museum [County Durham] at the weekend. More than 50 teams competed for the pairs title and about 120 for the singles championship. The winners were all from the Whitby area.'

III: Marrying

Jack Beeforth was not an inordinately voracious consumer of ale and beer, yet the pub was an important focus for much of his social and cultural life. He was, it has been noted, a competitor by nature. In his younger days a local wedding would give him the opportunity to test himself against other young men in the post-nuptial foot race:

I'd about 18 [silk handkerchiefs] yance over I'd won hadn't I ... they went off on their honeymoon and they used to leave it at t'pub. When anybody got married [families] would give a copper kettle to play for at quoits ... and then there was handkerchiefs to run for and bacca for t'owd folks. Oh, sike dos there used to be in them days when anybody got married. When I got married I'd three pubs to give handkerchiefs to ... one was at Yarwood Dale where t'missus came fra, and t'Falcon was a pub we used quoit at and t'Flask.¹⁰

There is the occasional reference in local literature of the custom in this area of the bride's removing her garter, or having it removed for her, so that it could be used as a prize for competition.¹¹ In the North Yorkshire area this custom had developed by Jack's childhood into a well-organised foot race event run by the local publican; the chief interest in weddings for the local youth was in these foot races and the prizes were now silk handkerchiefs rather than garters. The tradition demanded that the bride's and groom's families presented a piece of silk ribbon a yard long and two inches wide, a silk handkerchief with a sum of money or the ubiquitous copper kettle. If the families could afford to they would give prizes to run for to more than one public house.¹² On receiving the prizes the landlord of the selected pub made the event known, the prizes were displayed and the date was set – well after the wedding day since the pub would want to maximise its drinks sales: 'If anybody got married

¹⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

¹¹ Richard Blakeborough, *Yorkshire Wit, Character, Folklore and Customs* (Saltsburn-by-the-Sea: Rapp, 1911), 91.

¹² Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 125.

they allus had a do at t'pub at night. Not that night, like, first Saturday night after ... And them 'at won handkerchief, well they had to ... wish 'em good health and sike like. That's what they used to sing at weddings, that's a rare one they used to sing at weddings.'¹³

Song:¹⁴ Bridal Song

Here's the bride's good health we'll now begin
In spite of the Turk and the Spanish king.
And as for the bridegroom we'll not let it pass
We'll have their drink in a flowing glass.

So see, see, see that you drink it all
See, see, see that you let none fall
For if you do you shall have two
And so shall the rest of the company too.

The well known tune attached to the verses – 'Over the Hills and Far Away' – would have encouraged all the assembled company to join in the song. The challenge contained in the song text was an invitation to all the men in the party to finish their glass in one draught, without spilling a drop, on the penalty of having immediately to drink another and pay for the next round. Jack Beeforth described a typical foot race and the singing afterwards:

Oh, about a hundred yards ... [runners] could do [dress] what they liked. Some used to strip tiv it ... [men only?] Oh, aye [handicap?] No ... Oh, two men set 'em off, like, and two standing with a band [string]. Oh, it was ... singing all night after ... that's where you got to know so well all the songs, you know ... T'others joined i't'chorus ... why it sounded grand if mebbe ten or a dozen sang i't'chorus, you know. Why, you could have a rest then.¹⁵

In Wensleydale in north west Yorkshire, a similar congratulatory wedding song (the Ensilver Song)¹⁶ in a different poetical form and without the bacchanalian challenge, was noted by J. Sutcliffe Smith in 1930:

¹³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20 April 1974.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10 May 1974.

¹⁶ J. Sutcliffe Smith, *The Music of the Yorkshire Dales* (Leeds: Jackson, 1930), 43.

Now here's a good health
To the bride of yon house
Grant her a solid good cheer
Lord send her her health
Lord prosper her wealth
That we may be married next year
That we may be married next year.

Though these two pieces display a difference in form, their functions were the same – to celebrate the wedding, to toast the bridal pair and to have a convivial and memorable singing time.

IV: Hunting

The Whitby/Scarborough corridor is at the edge of excellent open fox-hunting country and it is no surprise that a social spirit of Jack's yeoman class, his energy and his love of horses should have been an enthusiastic follower of the hunt. For him, there was no ambivalence about his exhilarating sport. It was a cultural imperative, providing him with physical challenge, almost limitless opportunities to shine as both horseman and singer across all levels of local society, and a chance to try out and show off the horses he was breeding. In hunting, we have a powerful example of early exotic influences penetrating the area's insularity. In North Yorkshire, it has a long history 'beginning with kings in the Middle Ages hunting stag in the Forest of Pickering, and the monks of Rievaulx Abbey hunting and hawking on their grange of Skiplam [above Helmsley/Kirkby Moorside], and in the grounds of Welburn [near Malton]'.¹⁷

Towards the end of Jack's life, in 1972, there were still hunts at Farndale, Goathland, Glaisdale, Saltersgate and his own local hunt, at Staintondale. One of the most prolific writers on North Yorkshire country life in the first half of the twentieth century, John

¹⁷ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 128.

Fairfax-Blakeborough, commenting on the state of hunting in 1926 when Jack Beeforth was in his hunting prime, warned of the erosion of the hunt's importance for at least one stratum of country folk:

Yeomen were once sportsmen [huntsmen] to a man and looked upon hunting as a pastime peculiarly their own ... The trouble is today that very few of them do, can, or wish to, ride. They no longer breed hunters so that their sons are growing up without ever being in the saddle ... The 'other ranks' of the old Yeomanry Regiments were at one time almost solely composed of hunting farmers and their sons.¹⁸

Major Fairfax-Blakeborough MC, himself a member of the officer class, saw the importance of hunting's social ingredient and lamented its apparently inevitable decline. Yeomen farmers, though perhaps not of officer material, were nevertheless, he might have thought, 'jolly good chaps' and an essential component in the social structure, civilian or military. Jack Beeforth epitomised this class, which is celebrated in this doggerel: 'Here's a health to the Yeoman farmer/ Without whom we'd fare but ill/ A thoroughly sporting friendly lot/ Who ride as well as they till.'¹⁹

The *Whitby Gazette* was, and is, the organ of report and record which keeps people in the locality informed of local affairs. The newspaper also has wielded influence in tempering some social excesses through its minor courts' reportage, evidenced by Mrs Beeforth's frequent admonishments to her husband as he left for his Friday night gill and singsong: 'I don't care what you do when you're out, or what time you come in, but don't get your name into t' *Whitby Gazette*'.²⁰

Fairfax-Blakeborough wrote a regular column on local country life, and hunting and racing, from the first decade of the century until the 1970s in the *Whitby Gazette*, giving that

¹⁸ J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Country Life and Sport* (London: Philip Allan, 1926), 150.

¹⁹ J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Yorkshire Days and Yorkshire Ways* (London: Heath Cranton, 1935), 190.

²⁰ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 9 May 2000.

writer a platform for the views for what would now be called the hunting lobby, and for mobilising and sustaining local pro-hunting sentiment. His pieces in the *Gazette* were almost always read by the Beeforth family. Yeoman farmers like Jack had to be cultivated not only to make up the numbers at the meets, but also for their acquiescence in the use of their land for hunting. Fairfax-Blakeborough warned:

Whether those concerned with the tilling of land will ever return to their old love, the horse and chase, that bond of good fellowship which provided a common and cosmopolitan platform for peers, squires, parsons and yeomen is a matter for doubt ... Their fathers were the first to lead the way over their own wheat and to make unjumpable places possible; they would have been the last to put up wire. They knew the social and economic value of hunting for them and their whole district, so closed their eyes to the depredation of foxes, and other loss or damage they sustained knowing that they got full compensation in other directions. Hunting was part of their creed – the main joy of their lives! The hunting field was their club, they were welcome and welcomed, and were equally hospitable in return. They were able to form correct estimates of value from actual experience.²¹

Increasingly, farmers were buying their own farms and pressure could not always be brought to bear through landowners friendly to hunting. Hartley and Ingilby concluded that the survival of the five hunts around the North Yorkshire moors (including Jack's Staintondale) was because 'hounds were trencher fed, that is, kept year by year by the farmers [like the Beeforths] and because the old-time huntsmen and whippers-in expected and received little monetary reward',²² so that, for example, in 1925 the Farndale Hunt's total income from Hunt Balls, whist drives and other events, was £140 whilst their expenditure for as much as 53 days' hunting was £93.11s.7½d.²³ Hartley and Ingilby identified as one of the legendary names in the annals of hunting on the moorlands, one Thomas Ventress, whip for

²¹ J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Country Life and Sport*, 151.

²² Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 128.

²³ J Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Country Life and Sport*, 170.

the Staintondale and then the Goathland hunts, who lived to be 100.²⁴ Since Staintondale was Jack's local hunt he knew, and had ridden with, Ventress.

Aye, that old Tommy Ventress he used to hunt Staintondale hounds, and there was one season he killed 25 brace of foxes. Aye, we killed 25 brace. I telled Mr Hunter [the huntsman] I'd killed another at Mill End. 'Good God', he said 'that's brock the record. Come boys. Straight to Saltergate [Inn]'. Bah. Singing and brandy and whisky, owt [anything] you liked. He did spend some money ... it was 1912 ... I was 20 or 21.²⁵

Jack's song repertory probably included many more hunting songs than the three which the writer recorded, and they would have been sung to celebrate hunting days such as the one just described and to remember hunting times past. The Beeforth recordings, it may be argued, were made not when he was in his prime, in full voice, in a crowded singing pub, but as an old man near to the end of his life. Nevertheless, the writer recorded a *performance* – Jack sang as much to audiences of one or two (when at home in front of the farmhouse fire, or indeed in the fields ploughing with his horses) as he did for larger gatherings. The quality of his voice and his delivery had undoubtedly changed. His breathing and his memory were clearly deteriorating. In making allowances for his physical state and for his age when studying his performance, we need to position him somewhere in the continuum between the 'in performance' and 'historical record' poles of the Pickering/Green schema:

... a performing art should be studied as such. In practice this means that where it exists it should be studied in performance, and where it no longer exists, so that our only access is through the historical record, it should be studied as performance [signalling] a fundamental refusal to see everyday culture outside of the social and historical contexts in which it exists or has existed.²⁶

²⁴ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 128.

²⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 6 July 1974.

²⁶ Pickering and Green, *Everyday Culture*, Preface.

Of one of the hunting songs recorded from Jack Beeforth, 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt', Frank Kidson wrote that he had no wish to 'inflict on the readers more than two verses of this effusion. Like all the songs of its class, it runs to about twenty verses, and the prowess of every fox-hunting squire and yeoman in the district is chronicled: highly interesting to those who know the descendants of the persons mentioned, but rather monotonous to the general reader.'²⁷ Jack's version includes local familiar landmarks as in the extracts shown here but no local personalities.

Song:²⁸ The Fylingdale Fox-hunt

You loyal fox-hunters come list to my song
If you'll pay good attention I'll not keep you long
On the fourteenth of February as it doth appear
Nineteen hundred and eleven was the date of the year.

Chorus

*When the hills and the valleys did sweetly echo
And they go by the sound hark away tallyho.*

In Fylingdale Forest nigh to Ramsdale Mill
Bold Rennie was earthèd all in a steep hill
Many men were employed in cutting the rocks
Come cheer up my brave sportsmen I've reigned in the fox.

Up Saltersgate brow then he hastened and then
He no sooner got up then he turned back again
Hark forward tantivy hoozay was the cry
Near Saltersgate Bar bold Rennie did die.

Kidson's note on 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt' is intended as an assault on such songs' poetry but it actually makes a telling argument for the view that only if it is considered within its context can a song of this genre's real meaning, significance and function be properly

²⁷ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 138. It is interesting that Kidson's two references in this extract refer to 'readers' and not to 'listeners'.

²⁸ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

understood. To outsiders, it tediously recounts an unremarkable episode. To the local society the narrative and description is engaging and recognisable as a real event. In verse one Jack personalises the song by shifting the date from Kidson's 1811 to 1911 so that it comes within his own hunting lifetime. The ten verses of the Beeforth version are peppered with local topographical detail and landmarks, though not one of Kidson's squires and yeomen is featured. Michael Pickering has asserted the primacy of contextualisation in the study of popular singing traditions:

The cultural tradition, with its complex accretion of meanings and values, informed and patterned the effort among both individuals and groups to make sense of their shared position in the class society, the effort to construct, maintain and remake a valid sense of themselves in the face of basic structural contradictions. The singing occasion was situated in a specific and immediate context in which such cultural process was manifested, and while that context particularised and externally shaped the value of the songs to the singers and listeners during the occasion itself, it was nevertheless inseparable from and was shaped within the framework of tradition and of social experience.²⁹

Another hunting song, 'A Fine Hunting Day', in contrast does not include any specifically local topographical references but was nonetheless a favourite of Jack's. The opening verses give a flavour of the song:

Song:³⁰ **A Fine Hunting Day**

What a fine hunting day it's as balmy as May
When the hounds to our village did come.
Every friend will be there and all trouble and care
Will be left far behind them at home.
See servants on steeds on their way
And sportsmen in scarlet display.
Let us join the glad throng that goes laughing along
And we'll all go a-hunting today.

²⁹ Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture*, 18.

³⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

Chorus

*So we'll all go a-hunting today
All nature looks smiling and gay
Let us join the glad throng that goes laughing along
And we'll all go a-hunting today.*

Farmer Hodge to his dame says I'm sixty and lame
Times are hard yet my rent I must pay
But I don't care a jot whether I raise it or not
For I must go a-hunting today.
There's a fox in the spinney they say
We'll find him and have him away.
I'll be first in the rush and I'll ride for his brush
For I must go a-hunting today.

This song's hypnotic slow triple time rhythm (surely sparking in Jack's later life recollections of being young and in the saddle), the prosodic internal rhyming patterns and the song's use of character stereotypes for five of the seven verses makes it easy to remember and invites singing. Further, an attraction of the song for the singer is the four-line chorus which helps to punctuate this rather lengthy piece. The performing of unaccompanied song in pubs creates difficulties for the singer in holding the attention of the often reluctant audience. The choice of material is therefore most important - fitting the song to the occasion. In this song (song number 15 in 'Songs') the chorus stimulates group interest by giving the audience a role in its performance and maintains dramatic tension by juxtaposing and alternating the different textures and solo and chorus singing. Importantly, the chorus also gives the singer time to remember the next verse and gather composure for its delivery. The lyrics are little more than a paean to the hunt. They exult in the intermingling of servants and sportsmen and the wide cross-section of country people attached to the chase. Gentle humour is scattered among the verses with hints at the innate benevolence of judge, parson and doctor. No gender barrier is to be found in the hunt, for verse five relates that the newly-married couple: 'They one to the other did say/ Let us join the glad throng that goes laughing along/ And we'll all

go a-hunting today.’ The song massages the self-image of hunts people as a fine body. Roy Palmer used the version the present writer recorded from Jack and has shown here, in his *Everyman’s Book of English Country Songs* and writes: ‘This splendid celebration of fox-hunting will not please those who oppose the sport. It was a firm favourite, from Cornwall to Cumberland, in the early days of this century, written for the North Warwickshire Hunt by one W. Wilson’³¹ or ‘William Williams, honorary secretary of the Hunt in 1860’.³²

‘Last Valentine’s Day’ is the third of the hunting songs in the collected Beeforth repertory the first two verses of which are set out here:

Song:³³ **Last Valentine’s Day**

Last Valentine’s Day when bright Phoebe shone clear
We had not been hunting for more than one year
When I mounted Black’s Loving but the roan let me fall
I heard the horn sound and the huntsman did call

Chorus

Tally ho—— with hark forward—oozay tally ho.

Hark hark into cover Lord Hampton he cried
He no sooner spoke than a fox they espied
It being a signal he crackèd his whip
Tally ho was the words and then hounds they let slip.

A short commentary on this song is featured in ‘Songs’.

It is noteworthy that for those affiliated to fox-hunting (judging from the evidence in their songs), the fox itself is almost always personalised as a courageous creature, often the equal of those in pursuit. The animal is never ‘it’ but ‘he’ or ‘she’; seldom ‘fox’ but ‘bold Reynard’, ‘bold Reynolds’, or for Jack Beeforth ‘bold Rennie’ and (affectionately) ‘old Ren’.

³¹ Roy Palmer, *Everyman’s Book of English Country Songs*, 211-13.

³² Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 187.

³³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

The name shows some tenacity, for the first Reynard the Fox was the hero in the fourteenth century beast-epic satirical prose-poem on the then state of Germany in which Reynard represented the church.³⁴ An explanation for the continuing anthropomorphism in these songs may be that it gives heightened significance to the fox-hunt proceedings; if the prey is worthy, if the prize has been hard-won. The boast is then worth the uttering, the song worth the singing. The anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet might easily have been celebrating fox-hunting not war – the hard-riding, the boasting, the singing – when he wrote:

At times the war-band broke into a gallop,
letting their chestnut horses race
wherever they found the going good
on those well-known tracks. Meanwhile, a thane
of the king's household, a carrier of tales,
a traditional singer deeply schooled
in the lore of the past, linked a new theme
to a strict metre. The man started to
recite with skill, rehearsing Beowulf's
triumphs and feats in well-fashioned lines, entwining his words.³⁵

In Jack Beeforth's day, according to his grand-daughter Gail Agar, anyone could ride to the Staintondale Hunt. At a hunt meet in the 2000 season, Gail Agar railed against some of the huntsmen and women who turned up at the Falcon Inn in four-wheel-drive vehicles pulling horse-boxes. She admonished them, she claims, saying, 'Never mind coming in cars. This is a hunt. You are supposed to ride.' In the 2000 season, you paid thirty pounds for a day's hunting and you were called 'sponsors'.³⁶

³⁴ Alix Gudefin (ed.), *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (New York: Avenel Books, 1978), 1053.

³⁵ Seamus Heaney (trans.), *Beowulf* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 28.

³⁶ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 9 May 2000.

V: Racing

Jack Beeforth raised horses not only for hunting, and as we shall see as draught animals and for bringing in sheep, but also as an important supplement to the farm's income by racing at local events (gymkhanas, agricultural shows and special 'district' races limited to local entrants) – events which incidentally opened up more opportunities to sing and perhaps to earn some extra cash. His favourite among all the horses he ever bred was his mare Creeping Jane.

Bah. 'tween first and second world wars were bad times ... I nivver made no money, much, till I had that race mare I telled you about [Creeping Jane] but I nivver was short of money after that ... I could win a hundred pound or two every year, you know. Well, that was a lot wasn't it [more than the farm's annual rent] ... and she was working all the time. I used to ride her on t'moors. She used to have six or seven mile every day on t'moor. I had a lot of sheep [over five hundred] ... she was t'best mare I ever seen, was that ... Creeping Jane. I've run on Whitby sands from Whitby to Sandsend and back. I once won when they first got that race out. Let's see, it was about 1917 or 18 [Jack was 26 in 1917]. There was thirteen of us started off. I won easy, like. They was from Newcastle, Malton, racehorses and all sorts.³⁷

Asked if he had raced all the way there and back, six or seven miles, Jack replied: 'Nine, by God, aye. Then it came, like, district race. Fifteen mile radius. And I entered her again and I won it an' all. Two miles or summat. I then won variety of races.'³⁸ The song's title, 'Creeping Jane' (a name apparently antithetical to the race mare's performance), is made clear as the race unravels and as the horse edges, creeps, up the field to final triumph; its dramatic tension, too, is held by this gradualism as the first, then the second, then the third milestone is reached with Creeping Jane still behind. An Aesopian drama is unfolding, the

³⁷ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

³⁸ Ibid., 20 April 1974.

tortoise is victorious and the audience, having perhaps joined in with the prolonged chorus, is cheered by the success of the underdog.

Song:³⁹ **Creeping Jane**

I'll sing you a song and a very pretty one
Concerning Creeping Jane
For there never was a horse and there never was a mare
With Creeping Jane can compare.

Chorus

Fol the rol the diddle ol the di doh
For there never was a horse and there never was a mare
With Creeping Jane can compare.

For when they got to the first mile post
Creeping Jane was a little behind
But I stroked her little neck oh her lovely little neck
Crying come up my little darlin' never mind.

And when we got to the second mile post
Creeping Jane was a little behind
But she cockèd up her foot oh her lily-white foot
I said come up my little darlin' never mind.

But when we got to the third mile post
Creeping Jane was still behind
But I put my little whip round her slender little waist
And she went past them all like a dart.

When Creeping Jane had this big race won
And she never turned one hair
And she was able to gallop the course o'er again
And the others wasn't able to trot, fol the day.

Jack explained the context of the song:

An old man up Littlebeck here – he used to go to all t'sports [with a]
Galloway and cart. He was crudely [sic] crippled. McNeil they called him.
And he made that song up ... And he used to sing it every time he see'd her

³⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

coming and I got it off him – with him singing it you see ... he was at all t'sports and when I was leading he used to start up, stand up in t'cart and sing. Aye.⁴⁰

Jack's disappointment, if he had ever learned that this song was not written by his horse's admirer McNeil from Littlebeck in 1917 or 1918, can be imagined. Ralph Vaughan Williams had already noted a version from Henry Burstow, a shoemaker from Horsham in Sussex in 1903,⁴¹ and Henry Hammond, classicist and folk song collector, got another from S. Dawe at Beaminster in 1906.⁴² The nineteenth century London broadside ballad printer Henry Parker Such, whose business 'lingered on into the first decade of the twentieth century',⁴³ brought out a seven-stanza broadside which was reprinted in the *Folk Song Journal* of 1904.⁴⁴ Though the song, Creeping Jane, was very widely circulated well before Jack had learned it, it nevertheless held a personal and profound meaning to him attached as it was to the 'best race mare I ever seen'. For Jack the song was *his*; it belonged to him as much as did the animal he thought it celebrated. The song was not centred around a betting coup (as in the Burstow version) nor was it objectivised in the third person (as Dawe sang it), but articulated almost in the manner of a love song: '...I stroked her little neck oh her lovely little neck/ Crying come up my little darlin' never mind' [v2]; '... She cockèd up her foot oh her lily-white foot/ I said come up my little darlin' never mind' [v3]. Even when the whip eventually had to be used it was a 'little whip' which was put 'round her slender little waist' [v4]. After all, believed Jack, 'there never was a horse and there never was a mare/ With Creeping Jane can compare' [v1].

⁴⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁴¹ Roy Palmer (ed.), *Bushes and Briars: Folk Songs collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Llanerch: Llanerch Publishers, 1999), 200.

⁴² James Reeves (ed.), *The Everlasting Circle: English Traditional Verse* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 77.

⁴³ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 31.

⁴⁴ James Reeves, *The Everlasting Circle*, 77.

VI: Working

Jack Beeforth had both respect and affection for his horses though they were made to earn their corn. According to Jack's account from the recordings they were endowed with great energy and endurance. On one occasion he rode, he said, the nineteen miles from Wragby Farm to Filey, took part in three races and rode the nineteen miles back home along the rough roads in the evening. The next week, he said, he had ridden fifteen miles to Brompton, on the Pickering/Scarborough road, entered three or four races, returning home at night.⁴⁵ It is well to remember that the animal was also doing its work stint when back on the farm. Stories celebrating the stamina and power of the horse appear in the literature of the North Riding, supporting the Beeforth accounts. It is recorded, for example, of this region's Cleveland Bay horses (which have in them we are told 'some of the best racing blood'), that they could carry as pack, 700lbs (over 300kgs) 60 miles (nearly 100kms) in 24 hours, four times a week.⁴⁶

Respected though horses undoubtedly were by the Beeforths at Wragby Farm, they were not coddled, but were a well-integrated part of the family's farming life. Horses were a captive and passive audience for much of Jack's singing: '[You sang] when you were ploughing, driving t' 'osses about and sike like'.⁴⁷

If you got away by, say, half-past seven of a morning and ploughed away till dinner time and an hour off and ploughed till five, if you ploughed an acre you did very well ... wi' t' 'osses like ... it just depends ... what sort of field you're in. Supposing you were having to turn a lot, if you had good length you could plough an acre all right, but if you were having a lot of turning and shorting to put in, you can't ... I never had a tractor.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 March 1974.

⁴⁶ J Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Country Life and Sport*, 225.

⁴⁷ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22 June 1974.

Song:⁴⁹ **All Jolly Fellows**

It was early one morn at the break of the day
The cocks were a- crowing the farmer did say
Come arise my good fellows and rise with good will
For your horses want something their bellies to fill.

And when four o'clock comes aye and up we did rise
And into the stables so merrily fly
With rubbing and scrubbing our horses we vow
And we are all jolly fellows that follows the plough.

A commentary on this song from which this extract is taken is featured in 'Songs'.

Of this song, widely popular among country singers, Cecil Sharp remarked that 'almost every singer knows it, the bad singers often know but little else',⁵⁰ probably because of its 'simple, straight forward style and its availability on broadsides in the nineteenth century',⁵¹ for example, 'a catchpenny printed by Hodges of Seven Dials, London'.⁵² Common and hackneyed it may have been, but for Jack the song was 'true'; the events described in it went, for him, beyond an emotional truth – the credibility that these events portrayed in the song most likely could have happened to someone, somewhere, sometime – and passed over into a concrete and factual truth. Each singing of it would recover, for him, the times spent in the labour of ploughing and in the tasks associated with the horses, their feeding, the rubbing and scrubbing, harnessing and unharnessing. John Fairfax-Blakeborough was no musician, but he enjoyed many of the songs he heard in the rural districts around the North Yorkshire moors, 'All Jolly Fellows' among them:

The very fact that these old ballads still live, and are still popular and have been handed down orally from generation to generation, is evidence as to the grip they have on our imaginations. Many of them touch our own lives and

⁴⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights. 22 June 1974.

⁵⁰ Roy Palmer, *Everyman's Book of English Country Songs*, 20.

⁵¹ Steve Gardham, *An East Riding Songster*, 57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 46.

joys with understanding ... We would any day rather hear little Tommy Thompson (with one eye closed and the other fixed on the oil lamp hanging on the ceiling) drating [drawling] out: 'I'll swear and I'll voo/That we're all jolly fellows/What follers the ploo' and bidding the company to 'rive [rend] the chorus out', than to listen to someone crooning 'In the Valley yo oh'.⁵³

The sentimentality evident in the song's denouement, when ploughboys convince the master that they have achieved their work targets and they are rewarded with 'a jug of the very best ale', must have played ambivalently to Jack Beeforth, who himself had been a 'master', though in a very small way. In any case, Jack might have thought, the master is shown ultimately to be a fair and generous man and this is what the message of the song is persuading all masters to be.

⁵³ J Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Yorkshire Days and Yorkshire Ways*, 62.

3

NETWORKS OF ACQUAINTANCESHIP

I: Tensions in a rural economy

The intention in this chapter is not to detail a defining Jack Beeforth biography, even less to give some sort of comprehensive description of farming practice in his part of Yorkshire during the first part of the twentieth century. It will be useful, however, to identify and examine certain aspects of the economic and social life of a man of his period, occupation, situation and class, and to place his songs and his singing in the wider context of that life and to position him, his songs and his personal history within a yet broader framework of culture in the vernacular milieu of his period.

We have seen in an earlier chapter how location and landscape impacted on the social and cultural life of Jack Beeforth and his family; the sparsely populated, open and largely unfenced countryside presented many opportunities for a horse-loving man to develop his talents as a semi-professional breeder and racer, and as a follower of the hunt; the celebrations attached to these pursuits, usually in country pubs, often gave opportunities for him to display another of his accomplishments, as singer; the social intercourse and fellowship attending these celebrations extended the range of association and held the potential for invitations for him to perform at other social and sporting events. Most people like a good singer. Many such events in this district, where the small population is widely scattered, were esoteric, informally arranged and not widely publicised, so participants and performers were tipped off through this network of acquaintanceship. It was this same grape-

vine which carried essential news of what was happening locally in the realm of agriculture, within which much of the populace here earned their living. The nature of both social and economic relationships was not, however, purely co-operative and benign. It is true that a singer was often generous in ‘giving’ the odd song to another singer, just as a farmer might lend a piece of agricultural equipment to a needy neighbour, but the donor would have been greatly offended if a ‘gifted’ song were performed in his presence by the acolyte, without some sort of nod in his direction, just as an offence would be caused by the misuse of some borrowed farm implement. Jack Beeforth was at pains to disavow ‘ownership’ of one of his favourite songs, ‘Creeping Jane’, in favour of its long-dead supposed composer McNeil of Littlebeck (who purportedly named the song after the Beeforth mare) and whose ghost seemed to be hovering at the singer’s shoulder during his performance to us. ‘Why, I didn’t sing it a lot myself, it was an aud man that made it up that used to sing it’.¹ Similarly Jack conceded ownership of the ‘White Cockade’ to ‘Joss Cockerill down Harwood Dale’ and the ‘Merry Ploughboy’ to John Morley of Ramsdale Farm, Fylingthorpe.²

A similar code operated among singers down the coast in East Anglia according to this account:

Song ownership was a very important concept among these men. It was acceptable to sing a song which belonged to another man but only with his permission. The strength of feeling about song ownership is well illustrated by ... an incident in the Catfield Crown, where a man sang one of ‘Bullets’ Miller’s songs, and ‘Bullets’ had to be physically restrained from attacking him. The old singers ... commanded and expected respect. There was one incident in Ludham King’s Arms in the 1930s when Harry [Cox] and his friends walked out of the pub, because of the constant interruptions by some rowdy young men.³

These occasional eruptions, stemming as they did from the tensions often to be found in a heated and alcohol-enriched pub atmosphere are understandable – the ostensible objectives in

¹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

² Ibid., 6 July 1974. Frank Kidson referred to ‘country ditties’ as being ‘the exclusive copyright of old fogies’ who gathered in quiet public houses (*Traditional Tunes*, 71).

³ Christopher Heppa, ‘Harry Cox’s Friends & Fellow Singers’, CD booklet, *Harry Cox: the bonny labouring boy* (London: Topic Records TSCD512D, 2000), 30.

going there were, after all, relaxation and a good time and probably there were some men who would include in their 'good time' rowdiness and violence. During Jack Beeforth's working life, which included much of the agricultural Long Depression years of 1880 to the 1930s, the public house would not be the only place where such tensions were felt and expressed, though this would seem scarcely credible to the outsider viewing a landscape which seems to support a largely pastoral and agreeable mode of life. One remembers holiday posters positioning the terrain around Whitby, whimsically but without hyperbole, as ' 'Twixt the heather and the North Sea'.

George Ewart Evans, claiming to use 'techniques of patient questioning, empathy and a systematic recording of the living survivors of the period', has scratched below the surface of the apparent idyll of farming life in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century and up to World War 2:⁴

The set-up on some of the farms during these years [of agricultural depression] was anything but idyllic ... the rivalry, back-biting and sometimes open malice that existed even among the men themselves, should be taken into account when there is any impulse to depict the countryside under the old order as a haven of peace and rural contentment. The scene was not as it looked to visitors from the town – the Corydon and Amaryllis seekers – who even now [1960] are convinced that the Golden Age is immediately behind us.⁵

If there was no apparent undercurrent of dissension on the Beeforth farm, there was the considerable anxiety which they endured with many of the other farmers of marginal land throughout the country. Though not essentially a moorland farm, Wragby was not the most propitious place from which to make much more than a subsistence living in the first half of the twentieth century. The farmhouse lies close to the 180 metre contour about 4 kilometres from the 65 metre high cliffs at Ravenscar; the adjoining property, Cook House Farm, which the Beeforths ran at first in tandem with Wragby, and later on its own, lies a little lower a kilometre away towards the sea. Wragby lies just to the west, and Cook House just to the

⁴ George Ewart Evans, *The Pattern under the Plough* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 254.

⁵ George Ewart Evans, *The Horse in the Furrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 258.

east, of the main Whitby to Scarborough A171 road, and 4 kilometres almost due west of them both the moor rises to 292 metres at Lilla Cross.

The demanding soils at both farms are characterised as ‘very slowly permeable clayey or loamy with humic surface’, while the often adverse climatic variability creates further difficulties for farming.⁶ ‘Rainfall, temperature, amount of insolation and wind velocity all influence the growth of plants ... such factors as these [together with the land’s elevation] limit the growing season on the lowlands of north east England to about 35 weeks and on the moors it may be even 2-7 weeks shorter’.⁷ Moreover, in spring and early summer, the gentle east winds coming off the sea often produce a low formless cloud known locally as sea-fret, and during the winter months the cold easterlies frequently give rise to North Sea cloud – the so-called ‘anti-gelatic gloom’. Weather patterns here, then, are idiosyncratic – a few kilometres inland may be bathed in sunlight when Wragby is experiencing murk or fog.

These conditions were held by the Beeforths (father George, then Jack, then son Francis) to be suitable for a regime of mixed farming, which they all pursued throughout their farming lives and which Jack Beeforth expressed in the aphorism, ‘You don’t want all your eggs in yah basket. If t’ bough breaks, they’re all gone’.⁸

II: Hiring labour in Whitby

Jack Beeforth was born at Wragby and lived there for 41 years, until moving to Cook House in 1932 where he lived and farmed for 28 more years until his retirement in 1960. It is noteworthy that overwhelmingly his reminiscences, anecdotes and songs refer to life at Wragby as though he had lived nowhere else – Cook House (or Cook) is mentioned only twice. He was certainly at Wragby much longer, and this period included his formative years

⁶ Ordnance Survey, *Soil Survey England and Wales* – North York Moors map (Southampton: 1981).

⁷ D. G. Anderson, *A preliminary investigation of the soils of the North-East Yorks. Moors* (PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1958), 32.

⁸ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

when experiences would be imprinted most clearly on his memory. Wragby, which was rented, was a far bigger farm – 180 acres against 50 acres at Cook, which the Beeforths later bought – and the farmhouse was a larger building – four bedrooms and three living rooms compared with three bedrooms and two living rooms at Cook. Clearly Wragby took more managing and Jack Beeforth was proud of working one of the biggest farms in the area and the status that went with it (in 1881 Wragby was the fifth largest holding of the 73 farms in Fylingdale Parish).⁹

The farm demanded more labour than the Beeforth family could provide from within so one, or sometimes two, live-in labourers were hired as well as day-labourers who were needed from time to time to cope with the periods of peak activity on the farm. The economic relationships thus developed established a clear but often tenuous boss/worker connection and it is from his stance as employer that many of Jack Beeforth's attitudes, beliefs, motivations and opportunities should be viewed. The additional labour power may, as we have previously seen, have been recruited from the straggle of itinerant workers who called at the farm; George Beeforth and his son Jack had also engaged men at the Martinmas hiring fairs in Whitby while the old system of annual contracts was still operating:

We used to go to t' hirings and hire 'em. Whitby ... Oh anywhere in Whitby, they used to walk about and you went and asked them if they wanted hiring ... You could tell they were farm [workers] you know, they generally had corduroy trousers ... aye, very often a bit of plaited straw or summat ... some wanted shepherds ... you had a stick, a shepherd's crook you know ... horsemen generally had a whip ... Aye, Martinmas, aye.¹⁰

The ritual of the hirings went on in many areas until the First World War and lingered on in some areas including the Lake District and Ireland until the Second.¹¹ The arrangement was a very speculative and hazardous enterprise for both parties. An itinerant worker was able to see the place and the farmer able to try out the man's performance before setting him

⁹ Fylingdale Local History Group, *Fylingdale 1881 Census Returns Analysis* (Fylingdale: FLHG, 1986), viii.

¹⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 6 July 1974.

¹¹ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 51.

on, but here the farmer had only the worker's verbal curriculum vitae and his own judgement on which to ascertain any capabilities and application towards the job.

The parallels with stock selection are uncomfortable: '[The farmer] would come and have a look at you like a man buying a horse or anything. He'd examine you, have a good look at you and listen to you and see what you knew about hay making',¹² and then there was 'the farmer who actually [handled] a candidate, felt his muscles, spanned his wrists and surveyed him from top to toe, doubtless reckoning on how much work can be got out of him and how much he will eat'.¹³ The farm worker, of course, had to accept the farmer's description of the work and the living conditions. Jack Beeforth encapsulated the problem of the need for mutual trust in the transaction thus:

A lad goes to t'hirings and meets a farmer who says, 'Ista for hiring?' 'Aye', says t'lad. 'What can you deea?' says t'farmer. 'Oh, ommost onnything on a farm', says t'lad. 'Well thoo looks a likely lad', says t'farmer. 'Wheer were you last?' 'Wi' him over theer', says t'lad. 'Can you get yourself a character?' says t'farmer 'and then I'll hire you'. So the lad goes over to t'feller he were wi', and asks him for a character. 'Nay, lad, you deea want to go wi' him. He'll hunger yer and work yer and you'll have a right bad time'. So the lad goes back to t'farmer. 'Well, have you got a character?' says he. 'Why', says t'lad, 'I haven't got one for me, but he's just given me a right one for thee'.¹⁴

The roles in this little scene are easily interchangeable and Jack Beeforth could easily have turned the story into one poking fun at the lad-for-hire and, given his position as hiring-farmer, it would have been more natural for him to have told it this way. By portraying the lad as outflanking the farmer Jack Beeforth may be displaying some insecurity in his position as master, for after all the Beeforths had no long history as farmers (his father was originally a butcher) and Wragby Farm was rented and operated at the margins of profitability; besides, there was a time between Wragby and Cook when he himself was working as a labourer, leading stone on the roads, a job which lasted five years. Perhaps, after all, he did not see his

¹² S. Harrison, *Yorkshire Farming Memories* (York: Castle Museum, 1985), 4.

¹³ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 16.

¹⁴ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 21 September 1974.

position as master in an entirely unambiguous light, for he would have been able to imagine himself on either side of the commercial interface. The hiring system carried benefits for both servant and employer:

Farm servants' contracts ran from one Old Martinmas Day (23rd November) to the next. They were unwritten and based on local custom and no amount of notice could break them on either side ... Servants effectively sold their labour for a year at a time, in advance, and they were then at their employer's disposal, within bounds set by reason and customary practice. They received no overtime, harvest money or customary tips but they were never put on piecework either, and their pay could not be varied because work was short, or even if they had an accident or became ill ... Servants generally worried more about the difficulty of leaving a job they did not like than any possibility of being sacked.¹⁵

What custom and practice could not always adequately ensure was an acceptable quality of accommodation, nourishment and general congeniality offered by the master, as shown earlier in the Beeforth anecdote. Criticism of particular bosses was sometimes even more formalised in song where textual modifications could be made to include an offending farmer's name and his farm, as in 'Cold Stringy Pie' featured in an earlier chapter: 'Oh there was an aud farmer in Staintondale did dwell/ They called him Dickie Adamson you all know him well/ He gave to his servants cold stringy pie/ And without any sweetening that's not a lie.'

Sentiments like those in this song should not only be viewed as the gentle teasing of a largely contented labour force searching hard to find something to complain about. Those locked into an annual contract would find it especially disturbing to be in a bad meat house, run by a house keeper as in the song, rather than lodging with the family.

A bad meat house was soon widely known and had difficulty in hiring good lads, whereas a good meat house could demand great efforts in the fields without getting any complaint. In the 1920s the lads expected three substantial meals a day, most including meat, pies, vegetables and cheesecakes ... [live-in] servants wages were never more than fifty percent cash and much of their

¹⁵ S. Caunce, 'Twentieth Century Farm Servants. The horselads of the East Riding of Yorkshire', *Agricultural History Review*, 39 (1991), 150.

food could be provided by the farm, especially if garden produce like rhubarb and apples could be put on every menu.¹⁶

Workers who lived in with the Beeforths and farmers like them, would, because of the relatively small scale of the operation in terms of manpower, often be eating at the same table as the family, occupying bedrooms in the farmhouse rather than sleeping in a separate barn, and sharing family facilities and experiences. Whether regarded by the worker as cosy or suffocating, this arrangement may have helped to confuse the master/servant relationship as it moved into a close, almost familial, interdependence. In either case, by eating at the master's board it is likely that live-in workers on a mixed farm would have fared better than their counterparts who lived out. A variety of fresh farm produce would have been readily available and many opportunities possible for instant reaction and response for food preferences, quality and portion sizes.

Given that two important strands of his life were in employing people and in singing, Jack Beeforth would have found some fascination in the development in Whitby of an institution that seems to echo the earlier one with which he was familiar. The hiring fair of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a forum for bringing together those with labour and skills to sell and those who were able to use and buy them, has apparently been recovered, reformed and reinstated. Where, in its previous form, the fair certainly had a music-and-entertainment ambience, in its new manifestation it is to be its *raison d'être*.

An institution has become established recently at one of the two most important English folk festivals at Whitby. This festival is held for a week and takes over the whole town. For the last few years a concert known as the 'Hiring Fair' has been held. Relatively unknown performers are given a platform with very short performing spots, but this should not be understood as a concert in any conventional sense. The concert is attended by large numbers of folk club and folk festival booking secretaries, who are thereby enabled to hear the new talent which is becoming available on the folk scene. It is literally a hiring fair. As an institution the Hiring Fair has become more and more popular ... it can be seen as a mechanism to resist established (in popular terms) pathways by which performers become known. It resists promotion, public relations and packaging. It brings buyer and seller directly

¹⁶ S. Counce, 'Twentieth Century Farm Servants', 152.

together ... it points to bookings secretaries, and hence clubs and festivals themselves, seeking to retain control.¹⁷

The idea of the country fair seems one that has been particularly compelling for novelists, composers and writers during the last two hundred years, and this is not surprising, for its invocation gives opportunities for the scrutiny and evaluation of almost every rural activity and relationship. The hiring fair was an event in what an outsider may see as a culturally organic and interactive continuum; the outcomes of the fair would affect the district not just for the one day of the fair but for twelve months and beyond. It is perhaps predictable that some of those concerned with the organising of a folk festival, who are themselves revivalists, should look to the restoration of a now idealised rural form, the hiring fair, as a vehicle for artists to parade their talents for potential buyers. Both farm worker and artist offer their commodified talents within a competitive structure after which a whole year will elapse before another such opportunity to sell themselves will recur. The parallels seem clear.

Many fairs degenerated as their function changed. What were once events of some mercantile importance with the entertainment being, truly, side-shows, became solely displays of 'the usual mixture of dwarfs and giants, conjurors and learned pigs ... markets, on the other hand, have survived because they continue to fulfil useful trading purposes'.¹⁸ The Whitby folk festival Hiring Fair is in truth a performers' market and its superficial resemblance to the old hiring fair is unmerited. The folk artists are, at their Hiring Fair, performing under artificial constraints as they sing, perhaps, one song each to an audience of, largely, folk club secretaries or agents who may have been sitting in the auditorium for hours listening to dozens of other musicians most of whom they may never see again. The successful artists will have an economic connection with the club secretaries which may encourage them to pursue their full-time day jobs while building up their career in

¹⁷ N. MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), 132.

¹⁸ C. R. Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 229.

entertainment, a rather different relationship compared with the servant/farmer nexus where a satisfactory hiring day was imperative for both parties.

III: Stock management

The hired hands at the Beeforth farm, however recruited, would have had to bring with them, or develop, a range of skills to complement a small, effective and flexible work team. Jack Beeforth himself would have been perhaps the hardest worker and the most skilful of all at Wragby, and he was certainly the most motivated, for besides being a key labourer he was also the second-tier capitalist of the enterprise, though with his own economic problems. Much of his investment lay in his building up of the flock of five hundred Swaledale and Scottish Blackface sheep most of which he ran on one hundred acres of marginal land just off the road to Scarborough two kilometres away at Helwath (Elwath) Beck. A moor stray he called it. The sheep lived out on this inhospitable terrain for the whole of their lives, apart from being brought in to the farm for dipping and clipping; each year's lambs were brought on to the farm 'at t'back end' (October) for their first winter, although the lambing itself took place on the moor under the cursory supervision of the people from the farm.

The hundred-acre rough grazing cost the Beeforths £26 per year from the 1930s through to the 1950s, and being unfenced presented a problem of flock containment; Jack Beeforth and his daughter had to go night and morning, sometimes as early as 4.00am, to drive the sheep off the road and back on to the stray 'else they'd get killed wi' t' traffic'. This work was endless and did not recognise weekends or holidays, when indeed the road was becoming increasingly busy. Stock depletion was not only caused by road-kill: 'Aye, we had yan or two went ... Why, I once lost 32 good yowes ... two dogs worried 'em ... Oh, I didn't know for years ... until it was ower late whose dogs they were. I got nowt for 'em'.¹⁹

¹⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

The hazards to stock management and flock protection may occasionally flicker across the consciousness of visitors to the moorland as they motor over for a day out at the seaside, perhaps braking hard to avoid a small mob of sheep trotting along the road, and they may fleetingly want to enquire of a farmer: ‘How do you know how many sheep you have? How do you know which are yours? What happens when flocks get intermingled? How do you protect them?’ The farmers around here have faced these challenges since the earliest times.

The loss of sheep accidentally was often compounded by the loss through theft and in 1820 a score or so of sheep farmers colluded to form what appears to have been a quasi-vigilante group, the ‘Goathland, Saltersgate and Levisham Association for prosecuting felons’, whose implied objective was the prevention of sheep-stealing from the moors. Although the Association was wound up in 1876 it was revived under the less belligerent title of the ‘Blackface Sheep Breeders’ Association’ in 1887, with a new Sheep Marks’ Guide being compiled by the Association covering the whole of the district between Scarborough and Northallerton so that the useful identification of these animals was assured.²⁰ Prosecution for the theft of sheep was still sought: ‘Even in 1924 the Association offered £5 for information leading to conviction’.²¹ Nowadays the annual meeting has developed into a social affair, the purpose of which is, inter alia, the reading of the minutes for the meeting of exactly a hundred years before.

Members of the Beeforth family, daughter Ethel Pearson and granddaughter Gail Agar, explained that, during the meeting of 8th May 2000 at which the minutes for the year 1900 were read, it had been noted that George Beeforth (Jack’s father) had officiated as chairman. George Beeforth’s own father, Henry, had been a previous chairman but his tenure of office had been terminated in 1898 when he was killed by a farm horse (though the 1908 edition of the Guide does not include this sad event when reviewing the members who had ‘joined the

²⁰ T. H. Raw, *The Blackface Sheep Keepers’ Guide* (Whitby: Blackface Sheep Breeders’ Association of North Yorkshire, 1908), 9.

²¹ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 26.

great majority' since 1897). A more recent chairman of the Association (2000) lives at Wild Slack Farm between Lealholm and Fryup. It comes as no surprise to learn that in this idiosyncratic and esoteric fraternity this same farm was once occupied by Henry Beeforth then George Beeforth and that on one of the internal beams the name 'Beeforth' has been chiselled.²²

The Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association was formed, as we have seen, not merely for social purposes but as a co-operative venture to render service and utility to sheep farmers. The Sheep Marks are listed for all members and in the 1908 Guide George Beeforth has two separate entries, for Wragby and Elwath:

Wragby, near ear underbit, two slits far, GB horn burn, B on near side, rud on far buttock.

Elwath, stoud and underbit near, underbit far, horn burn GB, pitch mark B far side.

Such markings were essential for resolving any disputes between the Beeforths and their neighbours for individual animals but not much use when trying to identify flocks out on the moor, when a good dog came into its own.

[Our mark was] GB, George Beeforth, my father's name you see ... and do you know, my neighbour that lived at t'Falcoln they called him Henry Calvert, his was HC on his ones, and I had a dog, if them sheep got mixed wi' mine he would pick 'em all out ... My lad went to t'moor one day and these sheep was getting ever so many with ours, do you see, and t'aud roadman was watching him. He was sort of a Welshman was aud Willie Gibson, he lived down Harwood Dale like and he was t'roadman. He said, 'What's that aud bugger aim he's doing?' 'Oh', says Francis, 'he's picking Calvert's sheep out friv ours'. 'Why', he says 'how does he know which is your sheep?' He says, 'Ours has GB on and t'others has HC'. 'Why', he says, 'can the aud bugger read?' 'Aye', says t'lad, 'he can that'. And he went down and telled 'em at Harwood Dale at t'Institute that night about it ... by gum, he was the best dog I ever had was that ... Roy.²³

Stock depletion, for one reason or another, has long been a fact of life on the North Yorkshire moors and running sheep here has not been an easy way to wealth:

²² Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 9 May 2000.

²³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

The moor is divided into comparatively small blocks of a few square miles by unfenced roads ... Farmers whose land lies next to the moor usually own the majority of the sheep but unfortunately the flock size is too small to warrant the labour needed for adequate shepherding ... Ewe loss per annum during the period 1964 – 66 varied from 5 to 18 percent [Jack Beeforth retired from farming in 1960 though his son carried on until the mid 1970s]. Even with good shepherding and keen observation up to 50 percent of the ewe losses could not be accounted for.²⁴

The same report gives the major cause of loss as malnutrition. Lamb survival rates did not allow for even simple flock replenishment. To make up for the poor flock performance, farmers were compelled to keep ewes at least one year longer in order to maintain flock numbers. Intensive in labour, and unrewarding economically, small-scale sheep farming had little to recommend it. Those involved in this work may have anticipated with yearning and looked back with happiness on those few social events which punctuated the sheep farmers' year: 'The Goathland sale held in the open near the Cross Pipes inn ... There were no pens and the flocks were kept separate by the dogs. Afterwards every room in the inn was converted into a bar and drinking and singing went on until 3.00am.'²⁵ Jack Beeforth would have enjoyed that.

Since stock malnutrition was the main cause of the comparative unprofitability of sheep-farming on marginal land, then getting that land into better 'heart' might be one of the solutions which farmers such as Jack Beeforth could gradually have implemented. There are difficulties with such apparently obvious strategies, as J. Cherrington has pointed out:

When a hill farm changes hands, the incomer has to buy the sheep native to the farm at valuation. It would be useless to bring fresh sheep in because of the certainty of losing them. Although the majority of sheep do seem to stay roughly within certain vague limits, simply because that is the area that they know best and in which they were born and bred [the so-called 'heft' or 'heeft' effect] the overlap from farm to farm is considerable. As a result there is little incentive to improve the grazing for if the improver's own sheep benefited so would those of everyone else for they would be soon drawn in by

²⁴ S. A. Emmerson, 'Hill Sheep Management on the North York Moors', *NAAS Quarterly Review* 78 (Northallerton, 1967), 86-7.

²⁵ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 27.

the better grass. In many areas, much of the hill acreage is held in common and the last people to come to any sort of agreement are commoners.²⁶

IV: The Manor of Fyling Court Leet

For J. Cherrington, a farmer who, as journalist and author, has written widely on agriculture in England, partnership between landlord and individual tenant (though not co-operation between the tenants themselves) has been the reality of post-Industrial Revolution farming. Yet, around the North Yorkshire moors and specifically in the Beeforth Parish of Fylingdales, there still operated, when Jack Beeforth was farming, institutions, medieval in origin, which apparently actively promoted collectivity in the management of common land. These post-Conquest courts, here called Courts Leet, sprang from the Norman manorial model where a lord (who might or might not have been a peer) had lands of his own and tenants who had, in addition to their occupancies, rights of common on the lord's waste. The lord, merely by being lord, retained rights granted directly from the King to hold a court for his tenants with the sheriff circumvented and excluded, an entitlement no doubt highly valued; the term 'leet' described a court which exercised (and replaced) the sheriff's prerogatives.²⁷

The juridico-political roots of the system in which fixed groups of men in a locality were held responsible for the appearance of any of them in court to answer for their misdeeds (the frankpledge) have atrophied. Former responsibilities of local governance: appointment of local public officers, road maintenance, conveyancing of land, and of judicial matters: libel, assault, breach of contract, have fallen away. What still remains are the rights, now less commonly exercised, to graze sheep on the moor, turbary – the cutting of turves or peat for fuel – and the general duty to guard the interests of the head of the estate. 'Fyling [and others

²⁶ J. Cherrington, *A Farming Year* (London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1983). 29

²⁷ D. F. Severs, 'Courts Leet in Yorkshire', *The Dalesman*, September 1976, 455.

locally at Danby, Spaunton and Whitby Laithes] form the commons of individual manors whose boundaries [are] often in dispute. Both freeholders and cottagers possessed common of pasture, turbary, peat, stones, bracken, ling, and ... furze'.²⁸ Writers and commentators on the Courts Leet phenomenon, its rituals, privileges and responsibilities have produced many confused accounts, and it is understandable since each Court Leet is literally a law unto itself and each one displays its own unique development.

Jack Beeforth's memory did not allow him to give precise details of how the Manor of Fyling Court Leet operated and affected him in his day, though active it still had been: 'It's [the Court Leet] common land, like ... There's twelve jurymen picked you see ... they're supposed to look after things, keep common guards right and such like ... a bit of common on t'moor mebbe'. Once a year, tithes and fines had to be paid to the elected-for-life jurymen who were waiting to receive them at, of all places, the Flask Inn, the Beeforths' local pub. Business was followed by a meal. 'A proper feed-up, and sing-up ... Oh, there's so many goes to it now. Francis [Beeforth, Jack's son], Harold Arn at Bay and Andrew Fewster from Bay ... Oh, Earnest Atkinson from Raw is on, he's t'head man'.²⁹

Ethel Pearson remembered getting bracken from the moor for the beasts and pigs, and above Cook 'a place were you could cut turves', and a garth – a small field – for which her father used to pay the Court Leet five shillings a year.³⁰ All such fines, tithes and other payments appear to have been for trifling amounts – in October 2000 a new 'commoner' at the Danby Court Leet had to pay a five-pence swearing-in fee – and by Jack Beeforth's time it is likely that not much of the revenues found their way back to the lord of the manor at Fyling, Lady Strickland.

²⁸ Hartley and Ingilby, *Life in the Moorlands of North-East Yorkshire*, 73.

²⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 6 July 1974.

³⁰ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

Gail Agar, Jack Beeforth's grand-daughter, more recently³¹ showed good comprehension of the essential purpose of the Court Leet, that it was a sort of committee called a jury with thirteen jurymen and a bailiff or chairman appointed from within. The jury represented the lord of the manor who delegated the responsibilities of administering common land to the jury. They had to collect rents, called 'fines', from the users of common land and arrange the proper management of fences, paths and use of the common. Common land users had to apply every year and pay fines at the Flask Inn on the appointed day in December between 10.00am and 1.00pm. Thereafter the jurors drank, ate and dominoed the day away. There was no mention of any singing nowadays, as there most certainly would have been if Jack Beeforth had still been around.

While it is remarkable that this anachronistic structure was still extant in the twentieth century for Jack Beeforth and his neighbours, and while it could be dismissed as merely a piece of Merrie England surviving past its useful time, the Court Leet framework still had clear attractions for the lord of the manor. It continued to give a sense of involvement to the farmers and other locals, now unpaid and willing volunteers rather than the 'frankpledged' churls of former times, in the management of the marginal land; it took away from the lord of the manor the tiresome detail of running this relatively unimportant but often disputatious resource; it deflected from the manor house criticisms and animosities aroused by the many petty but often deeply felt disputes over the common land; its medieval resonances reinforced the dignity of the owner's position, and helped to shore up the social hierarchies of the district, at a time when deference and respect had tended to become eroded among a more socially and geographically mobile local populace – the Danby Court Leet has its annual public meeting in Danby Castle and tenants, freeholders and commoners not answering the summons are fined two pence.³²

³¹ Notes on conversation: Gail Agar, Burniston, 9 May 2000.

³² *Whitby Gazette*, 31 October 2000, 8.

It is instructive to compare the membership and the real responsibilities of the Courts Leet in Fyling (in existence since 1540 and perhaps 1394) and in Alcester, Warwickshire (constituted in 1272).³³ The membership of the Manor of Fyling Court Leet consisted in 2001 of ten farmers out of the sixteen people involved and they had duties which included the managing of the 7,000 acres of common land on Fylingdales Moor. This acreage has belonged to the Strickland/Cholmley family since the sixteenth century. Here the Court Leet monitors encroachment on the common land and levies charges for pipework across the Common, for water supplies and septic tanks, and for the siting of non-permanent buildings such as garages and summerhouses.

In Alcester, the employment profiles of the Court Leet members show no farmers but include solicitor, teacher, local government officers, health sector executive, engineers, landscape designer and psychotherapist.³⁴ Its role is ‘that of upholding and continuing the many colourful customs, traditions and court ceremonies, each part of the rich heritage of the town and the manor of Alcester, together with the addition of the pursuit of major charitable works throughout the community’,³⁵ and it does this through its officers – Bailiff, Constable, Ale Taster, Brook Looker, Bread Weigher and others. Though claiming thirteenth century origins, Alcester Court Leet officers on duty are decked out in the more accessible dress of the eighteenth century. The present writer, on payment of his Frankpledge Penny (£5) became a New Juryman at Alcester on 4th October 2001, but being a non-resident of Alcester was rejected as a candidate for the post of ‘Hayward’.

Beyond the idiosyncratic set-up of the Court Leet, the Beeforths, and farmers in this district like them, operated within the landlord/tenant relationship under less harsh arrangements than are sometimes depicted. Fringe farms did not often justify high rents and

³³ Bryan W. Massey, *Courts Leet Directory & Year Book 2001-2002* (Cheadle Hulme: Massey, 2002), 102, 81.

³⁴ Private correspondence: Keith Greenaway, ‘Hayward’ of Alcester Court Leet, 29 April 2002.

³⁵ Bryan W. Massey, *Courts Leet Directory & Year Book 2001-2002*, 82.

even so few farmers were attracted to them. During a fringe farm tenancy, it was in the interest of both landlord and tenant to show reciprocity during the vicissitudes of the farming cycle:

From time immemorial British land had been owned by relatively few landlords who let to tenant farmers whom they guaranteed to support in bad times as well as good; even though they did not do very well financially out of the deal because rents were low ... it was claimed to be an almost perfect partnership: the landlord provided the fixed capital, the land and the buildings and the tenant did his share by working the soil. In fact this relationship had only really been successful in Victorian times when much of England had been owned by families who had done well out of the Industrial Revolution and the exploitation of the Empire. They had made their money elsewhere and so were able as a result to support, there is no other word for it, an obsequious tenantry.³⁶

The landlord/tenant arrangement may have been mutually beneficial but it seems clear that the Beeforths left the 180 acres at Wragby in 1932 to move to the adjoining 50 acre Cook House Farm so that the family could, after three generations, get a toe-hold on the ladder of ownership, for Cook was bought, not rented. The 100 acre moor stray was still leased. At that time, much of Britain's rural acreage was changing hands and the Beeforths were just one of many farming families seizing the opportunity, as they might have seen it, to take charge of their own destiny, just as two generations later many families living in council houses were buying their previously rented homes.

Precisely one quarter of England and Wales had ... passed from being tenanted land into the possession of its farmers in the thirteen years after 1914 ... Such an enormous and rapid transfer of land had not been seen since the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, perhaps not since the Norman Conquest ... The old landed aristocracy and gentry abdicated. They sold their land and, under the temporary impact of the war and post-war boom after 1914, they found plenty of purchasers among tenant-farmers who bought their holdings.³⁷

Jack Beeforth's vision in 1932 of establishing some kind of dynasty or inheritance for the succeeding generations of his family, from the limited acres of this marginal land, did not

³⁶ J. Cherrington, *A farming year*, 49.

³⁷ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968), 169.

come to pass. He himself was still alive in the early 1970s when his ailing son was deciding to give up the farm, and his two grandsons, to the disappointment and chagrin of father and grandfather, were electing to enrol in the police force. Cook House Farm and outbuildings were sold and developed by its new owners to become two separate dwellings: Cook House and The Ranch. Wragby Farm has undergone similar development by its new owners, though on a much larger scale. Farming is no longer carried out from either of the sites.

These developments are to be seen as part of a pattern of constant change in this locality at least since the dates of enclosure in the Parish of Fylingdale in 1810 when many of the farmhouses which are scattered around the landscape were built or improved. Occupation of the farmhouses has often involved somewhat complicated arrangements: in 1881 Wragby was one of six farms in the parish occupied by 'hinds', who were put in by a farmer renting two or more farms to work the property not taken by the farmer himself. The planned Whitby to Scarborough railway, opened in 1885, it was hoped:

would greatly increase the number of summer holiday visitors, which in time it did ... With hindsight it is now possible to see that this 1881 census records the end of a tightly-knit, self-contained village and community before it begins to change into a well-known holiday village. Most of its houses would be let to holiday visitors or used as second homes by people living away and some became occupied by older retired people.³⁸

Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been a revolution in the countryside, 'due chiefly to the new farming methods and the development of the motor engine both as a means of power on the farm and as a link between the towns and the villages',³⁹ and the gradual introduction of machinery involving more capital expenditure, the replacement of horses by tractors in the 1940s and 1950s and in consequence of both of these a reduced labour force with fewer people living on each farm.

Jack Beeforth saw three institutions which had been central to his farming and social life, and which had required three different power relationships in order to function. either

³⁸ Fylingdales Local History Group, *Fylingdale 1881 Census Returns Analysis*, vii-x.

³⁹ George Ewart Evans, *The Pattern under the Plough*, 17.

degenerate or disappear entirely. The hiring fair, during which the master/servant relationship used formerly to be tentatively established, was swept away, chiefly by the Corn Production Act of 1917, which had 'at least recognised the need for defining a system of fair relations between the farmers and workers in the rural areas'.⁴⁰ The Goathland, Saltergate and Levisham Association for prosecuting felons, transmuted though it had been into the Blackface Sheep Breeders' Association, still operated as a 'protection' organisation run by farmers for farmers, but its former importance had shrunk to that of a small private social club.

The Manor of Fyling Court Leet has become similarly emaciated but the survival of the Court Leet at Danby, a little up Eskdale, is a reminder of how these apparently obsolete institutions can prosper. They call for a landowner eager to use the embellishments of title, privilege and manor, and enough of the local populace willing to enact their deferential parts in what they may see as their own culture and history. Given such participants, we should look to the survival of the Manor of Fyling Court Leet, for when the remnants of its utility finally disappear, some group of local bourgeois antiquarians may appropriate and re-invent it as a quaint and picturesque foundation existing since 'time immemorial'. Alcester Court Leet is its model.

⁴⁰ George Ewart Evans, *The Pattern under the Plough*, 17.

4

APPROACHES TO SONGS AND SINGING

I: Learning songs

If Jack Beeforth is representative of the English ‘folk’ tradition – his repertory contains echoes of those of some celebrated singers in this milieu including Harry Cox and George Maynard – the range of the origins of his songs would be expected to be highly eclectic and, according to Frank Purslow, might include:

‘classical’ ballads and the products of broadside printers’ hacks, songs from the 18th century pleasure garden and the 19th century stage, minor art songs and down-to-earth bawdry, rustic idylls (probably made in Seven Dials) [the location of James Catnach’s street literature printing works established in 1814] and erotica.¹

The heterological profile of such a singer’s repertory might have some (even if marginal) effect on his performances, though he may be only dimly aware of the differing genesis of the material: Purslow’s ‘classical’ ballad would have a long narrative with many repetitive textual elements and might be chosen to be sung hypnotically with phrasing and ornamentation used to enhance the story; an 18th-century pleasure garden song might be perceived by the singer to require an attempt at ‘posh’ *bel canto*; down-to-earth bawdry and erotica might be thought by the singer to demand a conspiratorial style with important emphasis on timing and *grotesquerie*. The diverse origins of Jack Beeforth’s own corpus will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study.

¹ Frank Purslow (ed.), *The Wanton Seed: More English Folk Songs from the Hammond & Gardiner Mss* (London: EFDS Publications, 1968), Forward.

Once acquired, these songs would have ‘begun to lead a life quite independent of ink and paper and to receive the buffets and benefits that are a natural consequence of the transit from one forgetful or fanciful singer to another’.² Jack Beeforth learned all his songs not from written sources but from his family, his neighbours and from the singers he met and listened to at his local pubs, and at the many social, agricultural and sporting events he went to throughout his life.

Jack Beeforth: [I learned songs] oh, off other folks singing ’em, you know.
Young uns learned off their aud folk.

Ethel Pearson: You learned yours a lot off granddad.

Jack Beeforth: Aye. I could soon get ’em off, like. If I took tiv a song ’at I liked, I could soon get ’em off ... two or three times, I had ’em, aye³

When speaking, Jack Beeforth used a strong North Riding phonology, dialectally accented and with rich use of local words and constructions. In the performance of most of his songs such pronunciation is largely, but not entirely, absent. The dropping of an initial ‘h’ and a final ‘g’ is commonplace in the spoken English of many regions as it is often in the singing. This and the inserting of an ‘h’ before an initial vowel (as an emphasiser or separator) appear frequently in his singing as will be shown in the next chapter. A. E. Green has considered why manual workers speaking with dialectal inflection and living in a rural environment under a primarily agrarian economy, did not, in the main, use a dialectal language when singing their folk songs, and has claimed ‘the virtual absence of dialect from the mainstream of the English folk-song tradition’.⁴ Jack Beeforth, himself a user of a North Riding dialectal speech form, certainly does not contradict this conclusion in his songs, with some important exceptions and this will be discussed later.

² A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 32.

³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁴ A. E. Green, ‘Folk-song and dialect’, *The Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society*, lxxii:13 (1972), 41.

Whatever the origin of a song he picked up, its first hearing would have had a telling effect on Jack's assimilation of it, and would have helped to condition the way in which he himself performed it. As an active and engaged listener, he would, during his first encounter with the song, experience a powerful and enduring imprint for his later singing, which would affect both the manner of its delivery and its meaning. The song's significance at that first hearing, perhaps marking a fox-hunt or wedding, would be recalled by Jack Beeforth for as long as he was able to remember it and sing it. This is not to claim some ossified immutability for a song 'as first heard' – variation, particularly for tunes, has long been held to be a tendency for singers of this genre – but to recognise that mediation (here by the singer, by Jack Beeforth and the audience) and situation (the venue, the physical ambience, the event) are important components in the transmission of songs.

The meaning listeners attach to any music (and particularly song) is invariably related to the circumstances in which it is first heard. If songs are initially encountered while an individual is part of a live audience or a group sing ... then the meanings are apt to be connected to the experience of that collectivity.⁵

The sometimes deliberate, sometimes unwitting, variation in performance, the process of filtering, shaping, developing and refining a song, would be renewed each time Jack Beeforth thought about it, rehearsed it or sang it, in what A. L. Lloyd has described as 'the vital dialectic of folk-song creation, that is, the perpetual struggle for synthesis between the collective and the individual, between tradition and innovation ... the blending of continuity and variation'.⁶

II: Unaccompanied singing

Jack Beeforth always sang his songs without instrumental accompaniment – there does not seem to have been a tradition of accompaniment for singers of his genre in this part of North

⁵ Peter D. Goldsmith, *Making People's Music: Moe Asch and Folkways Records* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 299.

⁶ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 16.

Yorkshire. Ralph Vaughan Williams collected 'Young William' – Jack Beeforth's 'Kiss Me in the Dark' – from bass fiddle player and sexton Willy Knaggs across the moor in Westerdale in 1904, but noted only the voice.⁷ (A soft bass fiddle bourdon to the song would have produced an interesting sound). Jack Beeforth had tried singing to the one instrument that was common in the area, the melodeon, but had found it not to his liking:

Some o' t'farm lads could play [melodeon] ... Reggie, he married my sister, he could make 'em talk aboot. And he used to go all over to people's twenty first birthdays and play ...they generally asked me to go with him, like, to entertain 'em [singing] not wi' t'melodeon, like. They're bad to sing to is a melodeon.⁸

He is in famous company in his preference for singing unaccompanied. Ralph Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd, influential figures in the English Folk Dance and Song Society concluded that:

The ideal way to sing an English folk song is unaccompanied. Our melodies were made to be sung that way, and much of their tonal beauty and delightful suppleness comes from the fact that they have been traditionally free from harmonic or rhythmic accompaniment. They are best suited to stand on their own, and we rather agree with the Dorset countryman who commented on a professional singer of folk songs, 'Of course, it's nice for him to have the piano when he's singing, but it does make it very awkward for the listener.'⁹

Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger were frequent arrangers and users of instrumental accompaniment as a prominent performing duo in the mid-twentieth century British 'folk revival' but considered that:

The British folk music tradition has been largely an unaccompanied one. The human voice, most versatile of all musical instruments, has been unhampered and the melodies have developed complicated rhythmic and linear structures, inflections, decoration and similar subtleties easily drowned out or levelled off by accompaniment.¹⁰

⁷ Roy Palmer (ed.), *Bushes and Briars*, 180.

⁸ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁹ Ralph Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd (eds.) *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs: From the Journal of the Folk Song Society and the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), 9.

¹⁰ Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl, *The Singing Island*, 2.

Instrumental accompaniment, where used, is a useful aid for many singers in the selection of an appropriate pitch at the beginning of a song, and, when not used, any artistic anxiety can be intensified. Where it is absent, it may deprive the untrained singer of support in maintaining rhythm and pitch, though it does not follow that the performance is thus impoverished. However, the fluidity of vernacular singing styles, with their flashes of *accelerando*, abrupt *ritardandos* and the often imperceptible changes of key, can cause many problems for the instrumental accompanist. In the songs featured in this study, any musical transcripts can only be representational of the singing and cannot show in detail the actual sounds made.

III: Approaches to love songs

The class of song most abundant in Jack's repertory concerns romantic love, separation and (sometimes) reunion, all the songs being bereft of any humorous content. The apparent contradiction of a vigorous, manly and witty person like Jack Beeforth choosing to learn so many songs of this type, dwelling on feelings rather than action, and which would often be performed to male-only audiences, requires some explanation. He may have been selecting songs from an existing corpus which was itself skewed in the direction of such songs, his choices merely proportionally reflecting what was available; it is more likely, though, that he chose these songs because the sentiments they contained touched him and had general appeal in whatever company they were sung, male or female, in large groups or small.

The songs' function would be to stimulate and reinforce the deep emotions – affection, tenderness, angst, loss, yearning, remorse – felt for present love, and help to recall those experiences and emotions of love now past. In these songs, it seems as if the male singer is able to sing about the pains of love, is allowed to watch the consequences, can describe them but is sometimes to be distanced from them.

Love songs were important to Jack Beeforth and to his audiences, otherwise he would not have learned them or continued to sing them; amatory songs contributed a large proportion of his recorded repertory. Why his love songs held so much meaning for him when much of the poetry in them seldom rises above the banal, and some of the music is commonplace, and why audiences should want to listen to them, begins to become clear when seen in a milieu where social interaction was often constrained and feelings often unarticulated. The singer and his audience may have found in them a 'truth' which would resonate with their past or present lives or their secret yearnings, and they would need such songs:

to give shape and voice to emotions that otherwise cannot be expressed without embarrassment or incoherence. Love songs are a way of giving emotional intensity to the sorts of intimate things we say to each other (and to ourselves) in words that are in themselves quite flat ... they make our feelings seem richer and more convincing than we can make them appear in our own words, even to ourselves.¹¹

The analysis of functions of the songs discussed during this study draws heavily on what Jack Beeforth and his daughter Ethel Pearson were able to remember, not only of the songs themselves but of the use to which the songs were put, fitting together 'what the song apparently says, with what the singer has to say about it, and, if need be, with other comparative material from the singer's repertory, conversation, attitudes, beliefs and way of life'.¹²

IV: Approaches to humorous songs

It is not difficult to identify apparent functions and uses for his humorous songs, for after all, Jack Beeforth got around to many social events, large and small, in his area. After quoits matches, ploughing and hedging competitions and at shows, people would always welcome

¹¹ Simon Frith, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music'. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds), *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 141.

¹² A. E. Green, 'McCaffery: A study in the variation and function of a ballad', *Lore and Language* 4 (1971), 3.

someone who could ‘do a bit of entertaining’. Organisers of such events would want the whole day to be a success and for people to have enjoyed themselves; people like Jack Beeforth would have been much sought after.

There were many advantages for the singer himself. Singing the picaresque type of song would gain him a reputation for being convivial – the sort of man you would want in your company – and a little cash and a few drinks might be put his way. Having a higher, yet informal, profile than many other of his fellow farmers might have given him a business advantage at such events, where information about farm equipment, stock sales, developing markets and the like would be exchanged. Moreover, much useful gossip might spill over from song-swapping between singers.

It was important for Jack Beeforth that he preserved his respectability when singing these often risqué songs and he did not push the ribaldry too far, for in a sparsely populated area such as this his reputation was precious to him. Not all Yorkshire singers had always taken this view when singing to pub audiences, especially in the anonymity of a large town like Leeds:

We struggle through the mass of English cotters on their Saturday night spree, and ramble round a passage and up some stairs to find ourselves in another of the sing-song rooms. A mixed company ... an elderly man in a smock and heavy boots is looking in vain for a seat ... Now the singer heaves anchor and is well on his way. He is an elderly man, with a smooth-shaven face, and the subject of his ditty is ‘When Leeds becomes a seaport town’. He sings the well-known song well, and with plenty of point, and he trolls out the lines as if he is used to the job. But he follows with recitation which disgusts everybody who hears it. There are a number of respectable women as well as men here, and both hang their heads in shame.¹³

Vernacular singers are often known to recycle tunes. The tune for ‘Kiss Me in the Dark’ occurs in the Beeforth repertory elsewhere, for it is used in the ‘Banks of Sweet Dundee’ and the ‘Brisk Young Butcher’. Sabine Baring-Gould commented on the over-use of similar-sounding tunes:

¹³ *The Yorkshireman*, 18 March 1882, 170.

Airs become deflected and influenced by the airs last sung. At Two Bridges one old singer, G. Kerswell, after giving us, 'The Bell-ringers', sang us half-a-dozen ballads but the melody of the 'Bells' went through them all and vitiated them so as to render them worthless, ... we took down four or five airs all beginning alike because one singer had impressed this beginning in the minds of the others ... Experience taught us never to take down too much at one sitting.¹⁴

This could certainly be true in the case of Jack Beeforth because 'Kiss Me in the Dark' and 'Brisk Young Butcher' were both recorded on the same day, the tune to the former being quite different from that collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams across the moor in Westerdale earlier in the twentieth century; it could be, however, that Jack learned all three songs with this tune already attached, or that he so liked the melody that he used it profligately.

V: Approaches to songs of the family

A number of songs in the Jack Beeforth repertory can be described as familial, that is, are largely concerned with themes celebrating or idealising aspects of societal mutuality embodied in family life. One of Jack's favourite songs, 'A Boy's Best Friend Is His Mother', cannot now be heard by some without risibility. Textually, there is little in it which has not become trite and banal and the lavish sentimentality is no longer fashionable in some genres of song, although it continues to some extent in 'country music'. When Jack learned it and first sang it, the song would have been received as a serious expression of the prevailing belief in the certitude and persistence of maternal love. Its implication is that sons often forget the importance of reciprocity in this relationship. Jack Beeforth was himself a sentimental and emotional man particularly where his family were concerned. Long after the death of his wife, he found it impossible to visit her grave and on one occasion 'when he had

¹⁴ S. Baring-Gould, H. Fleetwood Sheppard, and F. W. Bussell (eds), *Songs of the West: Folk Songs of Devon & Cornwall Collected from the Mouths of the People* (London: Methuen, n.d. [1905]), x. The hyphen in 'Baring-Gould' is retained in this study. Baring-Gould himself was inconsistent in its use.

gone to the church for a funeral he had to go back home, he was so upset at the thought of passing the place where his wife was buried'.¹⁵ He showed no embarrassment at singing the song, 'Boy's Best Friend', and in fact was delighted to have it recorded, announcing after the performance 'It's a good song, that, isn't it?'

The singer would have expected strong family attachments to be the natural order among his audiences who would have shared the song's sentiments without discomfiture, as they would on hearing 'Farmer's Boy', another song where emotional responses are sought from the audience, and where the text is replete with references intended to wring compassion and sympathy from the listener. For country audiences of Jack Beeforth's locality, another layer of meaning existed; farmers, their families, and farm workers would have been familiar with, and probably have had experience of, the movement of local and migratory workers as they sought work tramping from farm to farm. In this song, such is the sentimentality displayed that it is not enough for the boy to be merely unemployed, he has to be fatherless and, though young, to be the oldest in a large family. Here the picture describes, in societal terms, three idealised families: one impoverished but willing to work; another presumably economically successful and eager to give help and opportunity to the deserving poor; and finally through hard work (and not a little luck) the third family formed by the marriage of the farmer's daughter and the boy as they come into their inheritance. In this song, all the actors are touched by the nobler aspects of human nature, and the desire to sing a song like this, with its good chorus, might be compelling for a farmer like Jack Beeforth.

VI: Singing in old age

During this study, more than one reference has been made to Jack Beeforth's age and infirmity, implying a plea for critical forbearance for some aspect or other of his singing. It may be interesting wistfully to contemplate on how the singer of twenty years earlier would

¹⁵ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson et al., Burniston, 21 March 2000.

have sung, but since no previous recordings of him are available, it is impossible to show how his performance had changed, and possibly deteriorated, over the years. The futility of pursuing a comparative methodology between the young singer and this now old one must be acknowledged; what we have is a body of performances which must be judged on their explicit merits. Moreover, is it not true that most of the songs of the genre considered here have been taken from old men, as the collectors were urged to hurry and ‘gather up the fragments that remain before all is lost’, in what has, apparently, always been seen as a culture in decline?¹⁶

In 1905, Ralph Vaughan Williams was collecting in Kings Lynn and found that ‘most of the singers were over seventy and, though their memories were good, the thin voices of old age sometimes made it difficult to note the tune’.¹⁷ Roy Palmer believes that ‘the most important factor in the transmission of folk-songs was the activities of the “old singing men” of Baring-Gould ... whose skill was in demand within their own community at all sorts of merry-makings, both private and public’.¹⁸ Until late in his life, certainly until the early 1960s, Jack Beeforth operated in such a vernacular realm where public, informal, acoustic music was an accepted form of social discourse and where great age, though not a prerequisite, was not an impediment to amicable participation. Like other vernacular singers, he acquired the popular songs of the day and did not (perhaps could not) differentiate between the songs’ typologies or their origins, perhaps only judging a song by whether it would go down well at this or that venue, and whether or not it was just a ‘good song’.

During the recordings, Jack Beeforth never showed any irresolution or hesitancy at the start of a song (except where he found difficulty in recalling the first words), suggesting that he had a practised confidence and past success in a choice of pitch to suit both the song and

¹⁶ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, vii.

¹⁷ Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 73.

¹⁸ Roy Palmer, *Everyman's Book of English Country Songs*, 2.

his vocal range. He was giving the tiny audience and tape recorder a live, informal, acoustic, musical performance. Often singing in pubs, this singer would have regarded immediacy of response to any request for a song as important. A noisy bar would not be stilled for long; he may not be asked twice, so he would always go straight into the song with a discipline which never left him. 'Besides', (he might have thought) 'if it's too high or too low for me I can always change it once I've started. The main thing is to get going'. Sometimes during a song Jack's pitch drifts a little, and he occasionally sings sharp or flat on a particular note. This may owe something to his 83 years and his deteriorating health (he was to live only a few more months) and to his recumbent, bedridden posture. This last factor, though, was dismissed by his daughter, Ethel Pearson, who looked after him: 'If you'd have come when he was all right he could sit and sing all day long ... when he gets up, when he talks, his voice goes ... Isn't it funny, if he lays, he's fine really. It's best if he lays'.¹⁹

In his way of handling performance, Jack Beeforth shows an eerie resemblance to other English singers whose songs have been recorded. Leslie Shepherd says of one of them: 'Harry Cox sang with the confidence of a tightrope walker ... He didn't hesitate and almost always pitched his song with accuracy. He didn't need to go through the song in his mind before singing it; he just knew it'.²⁰ The assurance brought about by repetition and practice, together with the diminution in age of many negative psychological factors in performance, is not confined to this genre of music; however, for the already assured Jack Beeforth and singers like him, confidence, and not a little exhibitionism, would be stimulated by the novelty of performing to eager and somewhat fawning song collectors with their notebooks and tape-recorders. We should not be looking for shyness and timidity to have much influence on the singer's performance in the songs which he sang to us.

¹⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

²⁰ *Harry Cox: the bonny labouring boy*, booklet, 26.

For someone who enters into a song with such alacrity, Jack Beeforth's usual mastery of pace and sureness of pitch does not seem to be affected by the type of song he sings whether it be a love song, one of adventure or of the family. His performance of some of his songs will be compared with some of his peers in the oral tradition in a later chapter, but here we have little musical decoration – he gives no shakes, turns, mordents or other figures of ornamentation. We note no widespread inventive use of phrasing that might add further interest to a song, only the rather measured and predictable phrasing which has, regrettably, by poor health been forced upon the singer. And yet, for all that, there remains a performance which is sometimes amusing, often pleasing in its general delivery, tonal resonance and earnestness, and, given the circumstances of its execution, almost invariably fascinating. Jack's songs are to be heard on the two compact disc recordings which accompany 'Songs' in Volume II.

VII: Patterns of song gathering

It is likely that a more prolonged and intensive period of fieldwork here would have yielded a more profound understanding of Jack Beeforth's music; what remains conjectural is Jack's possible knowledge of other songs which he did not have the opportunity to sing to us in his last months; he may have revealed a more extensive and richer repertoire which would have given more insights into the richness of his life. Some of the singers in the genre have been visited by song 'collectors' many more times and over a longer period than was the case with this singer. It is illuminating and instructive to consider the relevant data for some other vernacular singers (all but Harry Cox featuring elsewhere in this study) the longevity of whose wide recognition as singers may be contrasted with that of Jack Beeforth.

Table 4.1: Selected vernacular repertoires

singer	born	first recorded	died	years recognised as singer	items in known repertoire
Jack Beeforth	1891	1974	1974	0	50*
Joseph Taylor	1833	1905	1910	5	32
Walter Pardon	1914	1974	1996	22	182
Frank Hinchliffe	1923	1970	1995	25	74**
Harry Cox	1887	1934	1971	37	141

*Includes two songs additional to those noted by the author, sung by ‘Mr Beeforth, Burniston’ (no dates).²¹

**This figure had risen to ‘approaching a hundred’ by the time of Frank’s death. It excludes ‘over forty local carols’ which he also knew.²²

Revisiting informants, though common in the second Folk Song Revival, was not the usual practice of folk song collectors in the first Revival and in this Cecil Sharp was one of the exceptions:

he visited the sisters Lucy White and Louisa Hooper at least twenty times; Emma Overd at least eleven times, Jack Barnard ten ... Sharp was almost the only collector of his time to ‘collect in depth’ and to go back to his sources time and time again, almost always in their own homes. Most collectors of the period never met singers more than once or twice, and then often in the strange and possibly alienating environment of ‘the big house’.²³

Walter Pardon exemplifies the experience of a ‘traditional’ singer who, coming to the notice of an audience more extensive than a purely local one, attracts the attention of those engaged in tradition as a field of scholarship or entertainment where Walter may be regarded as a primary source. The more visits made, the greater the likelihood of opportunities for identification of additional songs and deeper study and analysis of context. After the 22 years

²¹ M. & N. Huddleston, *Songs of the Ridings: The Yorkshire Musical Museum* (Scarborough: Pindar, 2001) 334.

²² Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1, 123.

²³ C. J. Bearman, ‘Who were the folk? The demography of Cecil Sharp’s Folk Singers’, *The Historical Journal* 43:3 2000, 756.

of Walter Pardon's recognition as a singer, little would have remained unknown about his life and his songs. Our knowledge about his extensive repertoire owes much to the industry and insights of a succession of collectors making a path to his door. Moreover, during the 22 years of his relative fame, Walter's motivation to enrich and develop his repertoire would clearly have been stimulated, pleased and flattered as he may have been by the admiration he received. In contrast to Walter Pardon's experience, Jack Beeforth's recognition as a singer must rest almost solely on the fruits of half-a-dozen brief interludes during the last painful summer of his life.

5

THE SONGS' CATEGORIES, PROVENANCE AND ROUTES: SOME OBSERVATIONS

I: Introduction

Attention is drawn to Volume II, 'The songs of Jack Beeforth', from which the commentary in Chapter 5 is derived.

Jack Beeforth's repertoire may be seen in a configuration of categories which are defined by the sources of the songs, and the probable routes of transmission into his orbit. Allowing that these categories are not entirely secure since there is some overlapping (for example, '29 The Mistletoe Bough' has appeared on both Victorian song sheet and broadside, as well as being referred to as 'from tradition'), they do nevertheless allow us to consider the broad structure of the Beeforth repertoire which in the above schema comprises:

(i) songs which either were written expressly for, or were embraced by, the broadside trade (for example, '2 The Banks of Sweet Dundee' and '19 Go and Leave Me'). Roughly 40% of the songs fall into this category.

(ii) songs from popular song sheets and/or the music hall (for example, '27 The Little Old Log Cabin' and '39 Sweet Evalina'). Roughly 40% of the songs fall into this category.

(iii) songs which were written to eulogise a particular hunt or hunting as a way of life and to extol those taking part in it (for example, '15 A Fine Hunting Day' and '26 Last Valentine's Day'). Roughly 8% of the songs fall into this category.

(iv) songs of uncertain origin and passage (for example, '8 Bridal Song' and '11 Cold Stringy Pie'). Roughly 12% of the songs fall into this category.

II: Broadside

The routes and agencies by which vernacular song passes from its origins through the networks which foster its adoption and preservation often operate within, wrote Roy Palmer, 'a complex interrelationship between print and oral transmission'.¹ David Atkinson has cautioned that 'it is much more important to acknowledge the constant reciprocity of the two ways of learning [through reading and through listening] than to suggest a dichotomy of routes or kinds of song'.² 'Without question, however', asserted A. L. Lloyd, 'the greatest influence of print on folk song comes from the broadsides'.³ Lloyd went on to describe how this influence had been exercised:

some specialists would try to keep the broadside ballads and songs entirely separate from the rest of folk song, and to consider them a category apart. In fact the two kinds are as mingled as Psyche's seeds, and probably the majority of our 'folk songs proper' appeared on stall leaflets at one time or another, in this version or that.⁴

The broadside was the most basic artefact produced by the printing trade – a single sheet of paper printed on one side only – the range of products including 'legal briefs, letters patent, indentures, licences, bonds and bills for payment, play bills ... ballads etc. The most

¹ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 1.

² David Atkinson, 'Folk Songs in Print: Text and Tradition', *FMJ* 8:4 (2004), 466.

³ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

remunerative, hence commercially attractive type of broadside, was the ballad since the public demand, once satisfied, could be again rekindled by the publication of new material.’⁵ The broadside sheet, folded once or twice or more, makes a small pamphlet and in this format were published collections of songs and ballads, as well as ‘stories, sermons, jests and almanacks. These “chapbooks”, as they were called (“cheapbooks”) became the universal popular cheap literature of poor people between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.’⁶

Low manufacturing and transport costs made the broadside and its associated products an attractive speculation for both printers and chapmen (pedlars), hawkers and chaunters who stimulated popular demand with the theatricalities of their selling techniques and ensured a wide dissemination. R. S. Thomson has shown that by the 1720s a network of regular chapmen’s routes for distributing the printer Dicey’s products from Northampton had been established; in addition the printed goods from this pre-eminent printer’s presses were carried by coach from Northampton to Oxford, Reading, Gloucester, Derby, Sheffield, Hull, York, Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Chester and Liverpool all on a regular weekly basis.⁷

Jack Beeforth’s milieu – the coastal region of North Yorkshire – makes us particularly interested in printers and their agents having Yorkshire as the principal location of their operations. As early as 1689, John White had received from King William III the appointment of ‘Their Majesties Printer for the City of York and the Five Northern Counties’;⁸ moreover, ‘after the capital, Oxford and St Albans York was the first city in the kingdom to give hospitality to the art of printing’.⁹ Perhaps the most important actor in York as the centre of broadside ballad and chapbook printing was Thomas Gent who ‘carried on a

⁵ R. S. Thomson, *The Development of the Broadside Ballad Trade and Its Influence upon the Transmission of English Folksongs* (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1974), 37.

⁶ Leslie Shepard, *The Broadside Ballad: a study in origins in meaning* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962), 26.

⁷ R. S. Thomson, *The Development of the Broadside Ballad Trade*, 96-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹ Robert Davies, *A Memoir of the York Press* (London: Nichols, 1868; repr. York: Spelman, 1988), v.

brisk trade, supplying the “wide-mouthed stentorian hawkers” with the ballads and broadsides, by the sale of which they gained their livelihood’,¹⁰ and who bore ‘the undisputed pre-eminence among the purveyors of this type of literature having been both author and printer; and the presses of his successors in York, James Kendrew and Charles Croshaw, were almost exclusively engaged in the production of Chapbooks and patter.’¹¹

Gent’s picaresque career had taken him from an uncompleted printing apprenticeship in Dublin to London where he got experience not only of printing but of the composition of chapmen’s literature and the arcane traditions of the printing profession. During a year working in York (1714-15) Gent noted the commercial, social and political dispositions of the place and he formed an attachment to Alice Guy, a servant of his Master Printer, John White, before moving once again to London where he operated for the next few years. Then through the informal networks of the printing trade, Gent learned that Alice Guy had been married to, then widowed of, the heir to his former master and he returned to York. He and Alice were married in 1724 and Gent became a comparatively wealthy man, ‘at the head of a first class printing business, which was practically a monopoly; for no other printer was to be found at that period in the whole of Yorkshire and Durham’.¹² By the 1720s, York was the centre of printing operations for servicing the needs of a large rural area; controlling these operations was Thomas Gent, a man steeped in the literary, technical and business understanding of the broadside ballad trade, much of his knowledge having been gained in the highly competitive streets of London.

Whilst chapmen were at first the means by which printed material was disseminated in the rural areas, the introduction of newspaper printing in York in 1718 by the White family had

¹⁰ Robert Davies, *A memoir of the York Press*, 149.

¹¹ Charles A. Federer, *Yorkshire Chap-Books* (London: Elliot Stock, 1889), 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18.

necessitated the setting up of agents in the larger market towns to build and service circulation. Thus the weekly *York Mercury* could by 1722 list on its front page 22 agents in 20 towns from Darlington and Barnard Castle to the north, Skipton to the west and Hull and Wakefield to the south. On the east coast Mr Robinson Post-Master in Whitby and Thomas Clarkson and J. Bland at Scarborough were the agents, 'At all which Places Advertisements are taken in at Two Shillings each'.¹³ By 1730 the east coast agents could be serviced by a twice-weekly coach run, at least in the summer:

This is to give notice, that a [unclear] coach is settled for this season to go from York to Scarborough twice a week and back again, viz to set out from Mr Gibson's over against the Mart Yard York, every Monday and Friday at five in the morning; and to set out from Mrs [unclear] ton's at the New Globe in Scarborough to York every Tuesday and Saturday at the same hour: Begun Monday June the 22nd 1730.¹⁴

The broadside ballad and chapbook trade persisted until the twentieth century, with Such, one of the largest and enduring London firms; founded in 1849, Such finally ceased trading in 1917.¹⁵ It was in the nineteenth century that production was at its height, with imprints showing 17 different broadside publishers operating from York, two from Beverley, two from Bradford, seven from Hull, 11 from Leeds, one from Malton, two from Scarborough and one from Thirsk.¹⁶ At the beginning of the nineteenth century no fewer than 75 broadside printers operated from London alone.¹⁷

As has been shown, Jack Beeforth's realm, the coastal stretch between Whitby and Scarborough may not, merely because of its comparative geographical remoteness, be regarded as a culturally insular enclave. It is argued here that, at least from the early

¹³ *York Mercury* 27 August 1722.

¹⁴ *York Courant* 30 June 1730.

¹⁵ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 13.

¹⁶ Steve Roud, *Folk Song Index and Broadside Index* (Maresfield: Roud CD ROM file, 2004).

¹⁷ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, 13.

eighteenth century, important influences upon the shape of popular culture in this area have come from outside the locale; that these influences have been driven by urban, sometimes metropolitan, economic forces; and that an important mode of inward transmission has been literary as well as oral.

Jack Beeforth left no broadside or chapbooks amongst his possessions at his death and he did not refer to this form of literature during the recordings, frequently citing members of his family and local acquaintances as the source of his songs. It is not surprising that artefacts of such an ephemeral nature as broadsides failed to survive, for they were intended to be disposable, even if they were fetishised by some antiquarians as they built their large collections of these items; some broadsides found a more useful and durable life being pasted on farmhouse, cottage or pub wall. More surprising, it is here contended, would be a local culture not profoundly affected by a literature which was locally produced, cheap and available, and where 'the pamphlets, ballads and broadsides, sold by chapmen or chafferers at fairs and markets, or hawked by them from house to house in the country, composed the only literature accessible to the mass of the people'.¹⁸

The broadside contained no music, but sometimes it suggested a suitable popular tune for the song. As demand for a more sophisticated product grew, and improvements in technology made development possible, song sheets with music gradually replaced the more primitive broadside.

III: Song sheets and the music hall

As early as the eighteenth century, commercial music emanating from London could soon be heard in the north east of England:

¹⁸ Charles A. Federer, *Yorkshire Chap-Books*, 7.

It was not uncommon for London productions to find their way north very quickly. In 1728 two productions of *The Beggar's Opera* were staged in Newcastle at the same time, only four months after the first performances in London. ([One] company is also known to have performed in York and Leeds.) ... the North-East, however geographically remote from the metropolis, could expect to view the new successes relatively quickly.¹⁹

Songs produced for commercial consumption couched in 'the language of formula and the mass-market [was] already appearing in the world of 1880s British music hall'²⁰ before Jack Beeforth was born in 1891. Asked if he 'would try to learn a music hall song that was going the rounds', Jack replied, 'Oh, yes. We used to get 'em off them, like, at dances you know. They mebbe had a man – gramophones i' them days they had 'em.'²¹

Jack never visited a music hall himself but his repertoire is deeply influenced by the songs arising from the music hall culture of his own youth and of the previous generations. In the course of the nineteenth century, the music hall had become a 'dominant cultural medium for working people, and the predecessor of today's vast machinery of pop'.²² No genre, no cultural institution can be 'hermetically sealed and history has shown the rich interactions between folk song, broadsides and the music hall'.²³ Martha Vicinus has described how the fusion of oral and commercial elements operated:

During the early stages of the halls, from approximately 1850 – 1875 ... traditional folk elements and folk songs, borrowed from an oral culture and the broadsides were very much part of an evening's repertoire ... broadside sellers hawked music-hall hits, giving credence to their claims of keeping up with the times.²⁴

¹⁹ Rosemary Southey, *Commercial Music-Making in Eighteenth Century North-East England: A Pale Reflection of London?* (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2001), 38.

²⁰ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 14.

²¹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

²² Ian Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 18.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁴ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, 257.

Vicinus, whilst perhaps failing properly to distinguish between London and Northern music halls, nevertheless convincingly argues that later, in the mature music hall around 1890, the system of booking agents, mass transportation and communication 'made it possible for a single [music hall] entertainer to visit all working-class centres in a matter of months. Whatever song was a hit in London quickly became one in the provinces'.²⁵

The railway historian, K. Hoole, wrote: 'Scarborough's rise ... to a major holiday resort has been greatly helped by the railway which, under the auspices of George Hudson, reached the coast in July 1845'.²⁶ Although Whitby had a rail link to Pickering as early as 1836, Scarborough's attraction as the paramount resort, and centre of entertainment, in this area was secure. In 1839 a report 'had estimated Scarborough's visitors at about 2,000 a year; now [after 1845] a single train might bring in 1,000 excursionists',²⁷ many of whom could be entertained with orchestral music in the Spa. It was not until June 1861, however, that 'Scarborough had its first heady taste of music-hall in the London style'. St. George's Hall became The Old Spa Concert Hall for the summer season. Nightly programmes were presented of "'buffo" entertainment – comic songs, dancing, acrobatics etc – to an audience seated at tables and abundantly provided with drinks'.²⁸ Competitors were soon attracted into this business, for example, the Assembly Rooms featured 'Charles Christy's Minstrels' in 1865,²⁹ and in the same year a Mr. Tonelli together with 'a powerful company' opened the Pantheon Music Hall.³⁰

²⁵ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, 257.

²⁶ K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain: Volume 4 The North East*, 24.

²⁷ Bryan Berryman, *Scarborough As It Was* (Nelson: Hendon, 1972), n.p. [6].

²⁸ B. Berryman, 'St. George's Hall', *The Mercury*, 4 February 1971.

²⁹ B. Berryman, 'Silver Grid', *The Mercury*, 28 January 1971.

³⁰ B. Berryman, 'Prince of Wales Theatre', *The Mercury*, 3 April 1971.

For Scarborough, the truth of Frank Kidson's assertion that it was the 'railways and cheap trips [which] acted as general diffusers of London music hall songs',³¹ can be clearly seen. Penetration of these songs into the Scarborough and Whitby area, then emerging as a popular holiday location, was assured, with Jack Beeforth's family, and their acquaintances, among the early recipients of this new cultural development.

IV: Songs of the hunt

Jack Beeforth was active in fox hunting during times before popular and political animal welfare sentiment turned against hunting with hounds. Four hunting songs in a recorded repertoire of 50 items appears, therefore, to under-represent the genre for a man like Jack who was a skilled horseman, enthusiastic fox hunter and assured singer. In studying the song culture of a particular people in the past, argues Michael Pickering:

we must be concerned not only with attempts to reconstruct the various occasions in which it played a part and the local culture in which it had an integral place, but also ... with attempts to understand the ways in which it gave a specific character and colouring to the lives of those people.³²

Simply to locate the role, function and effect of hunting songs only in the immediate aftermath of the hunt itself is to overlook the hunt's symbolic value to those who practise and support it. For those people (and for many who have never seen a hunt), the colourful images of the hunt are easily brought to mind. The ways in which the images have habitually been represented, though distorted in recent years by hunt saboteurs and earlier by artists such as William Hogarth and William Blake, have commonly been benign: the *de rigueur* dress codes of the different classes and the assertive conviviality of the leading actors; the freedom to roam in a manicured but fertile landscape; the well-groomed horses and hounds working in

³¹ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 71.

³² Michael Pickering, 'Song and Social Context', I. Russell (ed.), *Singer, Song and Scholar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 82.

concert; the almost inevitably fine weather; the implied inclusivity of the occasion when anyone could participate; the professed mutual respect between predators and victim.

Fox hunting is regarded by some who participate in it not as a mere sport or pastime but as ritual: 'The ceremonial dress, the meticulous manners and the quasi-liturgical language are most clearly observed in the hunting-field, which begins in a meet and a formal stirrup cup.' Here ritual is 'an eternal pattern... the voice of the community as it renews itself through the voice of its members' where any infringement of the dress code is seen to 'contain a message of disdain, a refusal to immerse oneself in the collective enterprise or surrender to its laws' which are seen to be couched in 'a ceremonial jargon derived from Norman French [with] a strict code of manners that can be traced to the laws of chivalry'.³³

Authenticity in this self-regarding account emanating from the haut-bourgeois milieu farther south would not have been recognized by Jack Beeforth. One photograph in the writer's possession of Jack's attendance at the Staintondale meet in the 1930s shows him next to the Master of Foxhounds and Whipper-in with Jack wearing, apparently, his everyday clothes including gaiters and cloth cap, which suggests a less hierarchical *laissez-faire* arrangement at Staintondale. Moreover, pretensions for the medieval origins of foxhunting and its trappings begin to be undermined by the claim that Britain's oldest foxhunt, the Bilsdale (Bilsdale Moor lies ten kilometres north of Helmsley), was founded as late as the 1670s.³⁴ It was not until after 1760, when the first of the enclosure acts was passed, that hunting deer became a more difficult pursuit and fox hunting easier and more common, with the new hedges and fences encouraging the skill of jumping.³⁵

If it is not a Georgian invention, fox hunting may be regarded as an eighteenth century cultural reconstruction of a pastoral mythology, fashioned to confront the accelerating industrialisation and urbanisation then underway in England. Jack's song '26 Last

³³ *The Observer*, 'In for a hound ...', Roger Scruton. 28 November 2004.

³⁴ *The Guardian*, 'A short history of the foxhunt', unattributed. 19 November 2004.

³⁵ *The Guardian*, 'A Georgian invention', Jonathan Jones. 22 November 2004.

Valentine's Day', being first published c1770, is one of the early fruits of this cultural romanticism.

Nevertheless, images of a sometimes idealised country life would have been recalled by himself and his audience on whatever occasion Jack Beeforth sang one of his hunting songs, not merely when the hunt had just ended. That Jack recorded only four of these songs for us may have more to do with his perception of the wants of his interviewer rather than with what he himself would have liked to sing. As has been shown in the notes on Jack's repertoire, hunting songs have often appeared in print since the eighteenth century, and seem to have originally been aimed at consumers of the higher social classes. However, evidence that Jack took any of his songs directly from a written source rests solely on '17 Fylingdale Fox-hunt (1942)'. The transmission of hunting songs to him is almost certainly to have taken place during the many singing occasions he attended, new songs coming to him when hunt met hunt, or when singers from other hunting fraternities visited or settled in his locality.

V: Songs of uncertain origin and passage

A. L. Lloyd believed that 'In its natural state folk song is transmitted by word of mouth; in consequence a song does not circulate in a fixed form but undergoes changes from place to place, singer to singer, performance to performance even, and these changes are ... the source of its virtues ... orality is', continued Lloyd, 'a most important characteristic of folk song'.³⁶ The literary and commercial essence of the first two categories considered here (broadside and items from song sheets and the music hall) is absent from both hunting songs and this last category of songs, where the origins and routes to Jack Beeforth's world are

³⁶ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 29.

unclear and where orality is manifest. Roy Palmer has seen problems arising in considering ballads which have come to light after periods of oral circulation:

One has to ask how they might have evolved between their origin and their first fixation in print ... and whether their message is the same for later generations as it was for the original singers and listeners. Unfortunately, these questions are often unanswerable. What is clear however, is that these ballads were cherished and handed on by ordinary people. A subterranean stream may run along silently for centuries and then bubble to the surface ... It may then disappear for ever, survive to be recorded, preserved like an archaeological specimen, or given fresh life, albeit by a new means of transmission.³⁷

It should not be surprising if the Beeforth songs for which now there is only vocal record, some day turn up in an earlier printed form.

Since our immediate interest here lies not only in the possible genesis of the songs but in how they might have been carried into Jack Beeforth's world, we can turn to what for some might be conjecture but what for A. L. Lloyd was the glaringly obvious: 'if domestic servants and other workers from the countryside brought rural song into town houses and market-places, they took town versions of songs back home with them to add to the repertory of the villages ... So broad is the road between town and country.'³⁸

The way to this part of North Yorkshire has for centuries been travelled by packmen, pedlars, railway navvies, native and Irish seasonal agricultural workers, domestic and farm servants, crews of whalers, fishing vessels and cargo boats, and by generations of health- and pleasure-seekers in horse-drawn coach, railway carriage, charabanc and motor car. The economic consequences of this flow helped to sustain the well-being of this apparently remote area and to transform its urban and rural landscapes. Changes in the cultural landscape brought about by incomers may be more difficult to identify but here they are seen

³⁷ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 3.

³⁸ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 32-3.

clearly in the songs which Jack Beeforth chose to learn and sing, for almost all of them were brought in from outside.

VI: Summary

The purpose for which a typology of categories has been constructed to overlay the Beeforth repertoire has been to use it as an aid in tracing the possible routes of the songs. For Jack Beeforth, however, such categories carried little significance for he believed, merely, that old songs were inherently better than new songs: 'I deeant care on 'em [new songs] ... there's no meaning',³⁹ and old songs were simply those which were not new. His songs included a few which have entered the country music corpus (for example, '19 Go and Leave Me'; '27 The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane'; '48 Will You Love Me when I'm Old?') but he was not aware that there existed such a genre.

More than half his repertoire could be considered to belong to the standard corpus of 'folk' songs but he was not heard to use the term; he had no knowledge of the existence of, nor had he ever visited, folk song clubs. However, during one recording session Jack's daughter Ethel interjected, 'Sing him "The Tailor's Britches" ... he'll like that better', and after the song, 'I telled you he'd like that. I knew you'd like that.'⁴⁰ Significantly Ethel seemed to have detected different responses from the visitor for different songs during the recording events and seemed able to hear some songs as categorically different from others, whilst Jack himself could not. Ethel's generation (she was 53 when these recordings were made) had been exposed to radio and television at an earlier age than had her father and she would have been more familiar with simple musically descriptive labelling such as classical; pop; jazz; country; folk, than would people of her father's age.

³⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22 June 1974.

In elaborating Raymond Williams's recognition of 'stable' and 'dynamic' sets of social relations and interests, and the development of this idea into 'dominant', 'residual' and 'emergent' forms in cultural expression,⁴¹ Richard Middleton has suggested that within popular music in Britain around 1900, 'the forms of "high" music hall were dominant, those of street ballad and indigenous rural song were residual, and those of syncopated dance music (ragtime, foxtrot, and the like) were emergent'.⁴² This particular reference carries an intensified relevance for us since it is around 1900 that the young Jack Beeforth gave one of his early public performances singing 'It Was Early in the Spring' at Flask Sports.⁴³ It is only from the perspective of a 1900 synchronicity that the Beeforth repertoire can be seen as representing the Williams's prescription, and then only crudely, being as it is heavily skewed towards the dominant and residual elements then current. Moreover, to accept this is to believe that Jack learned almost all his songs in that year though it would seem more likely that the repertoire was assembled incrementally during Jack's lifetime (he sang for the last time in a pub at the Shepherd's Arms, Staintondale on his 80th birthday in 1971).⁴⁴

The difficulties presented by this latter diachronic perspective arise from the detail of the origins of the songs, only three of which can with certainty be dated later than 1900 and even these three were written before 1910. Through this view Jack emerges as a singer who was not attracted by songs of World War 1, the 1930s or World War 2: for him there was no 'Tipperary', 'You Are My Sunshine', 'White Cliffs of Dover' or any of the singable love songs and novelty numbers of those times which he might have been expected to learn. This is not to argue that Jack did not add to his repertoire after 1910, but that he appears to have

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, *Culture* [1981] (Cambridge: Fontana, 1984), 203-4.

⁴² Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 12.

⁴³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1974.

wanted only to learn songs which were ‘old’ and that had been passed onto him by ‘old folks’, and this excluded any song composed in the 64 years between 1910 and 1974, the year of his death. Issues of mediation and omission in the recording process, Jack’s limited exposure to recording and broadcasting technologies and the comparative potency of long-term recollection compared with short-term memory for an ageing man might account for some of, but not all of, this curious phenomenon.

A brief allusion to the songs of another vernacular singer is apposite here. Walter Pardon (1914-96), of a generation following that of Jack Beeforth, would have been more exposed than was Jack to the burgeoning output and dissemination of popular song. Nevertheless even a brief examination of his repertoire (displayed elsewhere in this study) shows that his songs have an overwhelmingly nineteenth- and early twentieth-century provenance and a ‘residual’ cultural form. New songs which became widely popular after World War 2 such as ‘By the Side of the Zuider Zee’, ‘I Traced Her Little Footprints in the Snow’ and ‘Yellow Rose of Texas’, though appearing in Walter’s list are so few as to seem exotic there. Like Jack Beeforth, Walter learned his songs chiefly through his family; but unlike Jack he did not sing in pubs or elsewhere in public until he was taken up by the folk club movement when he was sixty. Opportunities for him to learn new material had depended until then on radio and later television and on his record collection.

Jack Beeforth, then, cannot be regarded as a singer who uniquely carried a collection of songs largely belonging to an earlier generation through to old age, whilst almost completely spurning those written in his own lifetime. Jack did this not through some omission but from choice, though he was uneasy about labelling his songs. When he was asked to describe or

define the 'old songs' that he sang, his 'Oh, I don't know what I do',⁴⁵ was dismissive enough to bring that part of the proceedings to an end.

⁴⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974'

PART TWO

Foreword to Part Two

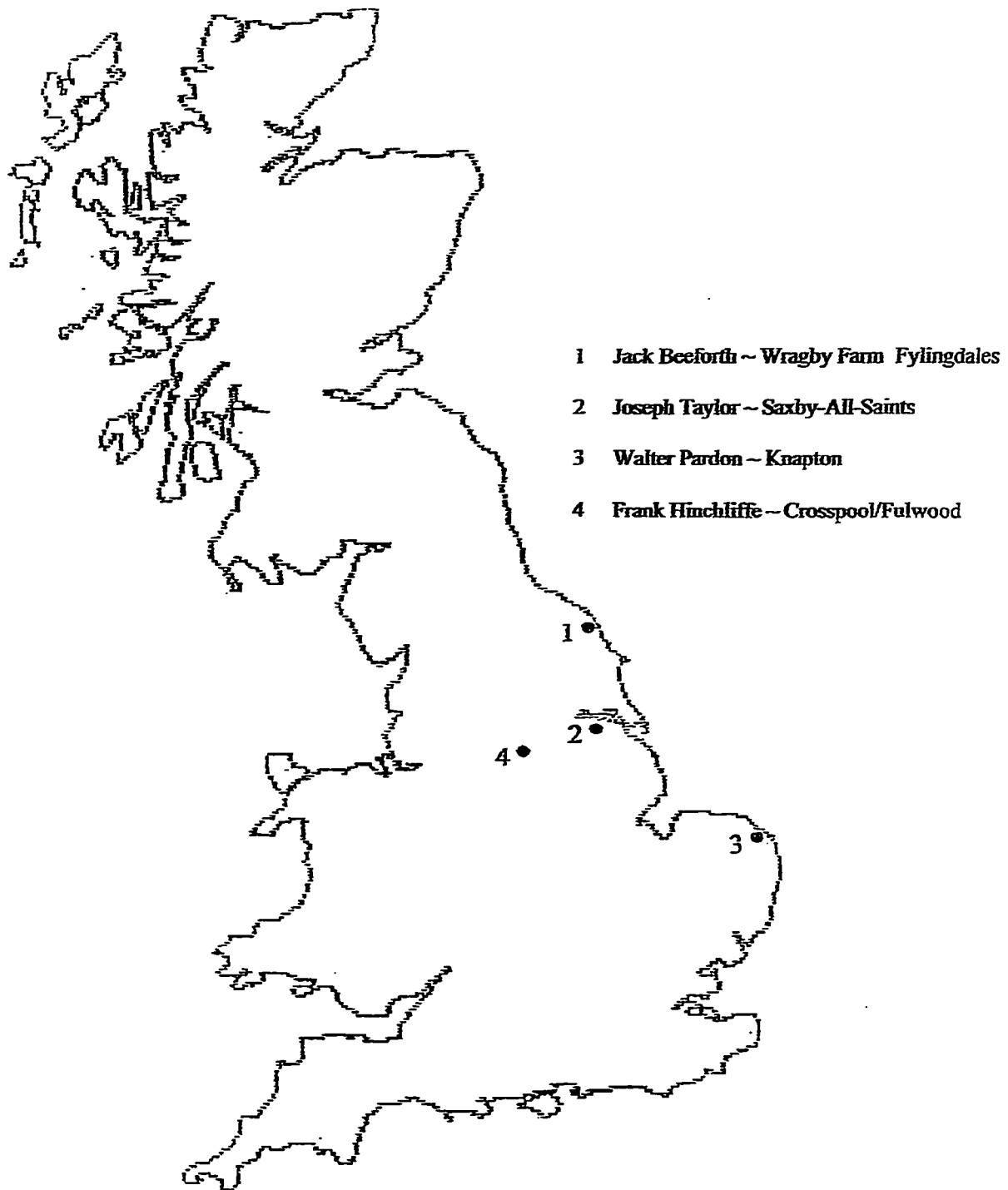
The first part of this thesis has located and interpreted Jack Beeforth's life (1891-1974) within his own cultural, social and economic universe and has discussed the role of his songs and his singing in it. In this second part, the positioning of the commentary into a wider arena sets the analysis beside the accounts of other English vernacular singers, seeking to establish commonalities and diversities, orthodoxies and singularities in the interpretation of the different narratives which emerge, in their repertoires, and in how they sang.

Three singers have been identified for this purpose – Joseph Taylor (1833-1910), Walter Pardon (1914-1996) and Frank Hinchliffe (1923-1995) – whose personal histories share with Jack Beeforth important characteristics of gender, class, job and rural location in the east of England (Map 6.1). Their overlapping life spans have taken in more than a century-and-a-half of profound cultural change. Moreover, there is a body of recorded matter from these singers and some documented accounts of their lives, accounts which are substantial though often fragmented and diffuse.

The second part of this study springs from the interrogation and interpretation of this material and that of Jack Beeforth, commencing with the brief personal histories of all four men. For the purposes of consistency and completeness, a resumé of Jack Beeforth's narrative appears in the same form as that of the others. In the following commentaries and analysis of their songs, the singers are presented thus: 1 Jack Beeforth 2 Joseph Taylor 3 Walter Pardon and 4 Frank Hinchliffe.

At the end of the analysis, in Chapter 13, important themes and issues emerging from the findings are summarised and discussed.

Map 6.1: Locations of the four featured singers



THE PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF FOUR VERNACULAR SINGERS

I: John William (Jack) Beeforth 1891-1974

Jack Beeforth and his family might be regarded today as having been ‘late adopters’ of technological innovation, for developments which would have helped to improve their farming efficiency and enhance their personal and social lives were not readily taken up. Wragby Farm was certainly equipped with a variety of machinery, acquired mostly second hand, over the years: ‘scruffler’ harrow, roller, fingerbar grasscutter, hayturner, binder and a selection of drills,¹ but all these machines and the farm’s single plough depended on the horse for their operation. After his retirement from farming in June 1960, Jack, then sixty-nine years old, could look back and say with evident pride rather than regret, ‘I never had a tractor’,² and his daughter could reflect, ‘we never had a milking machine’,³ ‘we used to milk by hand’.⁴

Jack said that he was only nine years old, in 1900, when he saw his first motor negotiating the then unmetalled Whitby to Scarborough highway, ‘rattling and clattering along the hard rough road, just like a horse-track’,⁵ but he himself never owned or drove a car: ‘if he went anywhere it was on the bus or by horse’.⁶ Moreover, although broadcasting from the BBC

¹ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 21 March 2000.

² Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

2LO station began in 1922,⁷ it was not until fifteen years later that the Beeforth household possessed an accumulator-battery wireless; 'I was seventeen', remembers Jack's daughter, Ethel Pearson, 'and we thought we'd got t'world'.⁸

There was, too, no telephone at Wragby and Jack had to ride the three miles or so to Robin Hood's Bay if a doctor was needed at the farm.⁹ When examining the reason for the low take-up of technology at Wragby, we do not find a conservatism in Jack Beeforth that might make him believe older ways to be better, nor was the Beeforth attitude simply technophobic. Jack was a resourceful man of many skills who 'could put his hand to anything',¹⁰ including making essential running repairs to the farm's mechanical equipment. Wragby was fortunate in having in the farm buildings one of the few forges in the district. During the visiting blacksmith's one-day-a-week sessions, at which the smith attended to the farming needs of Wragby and of many other local farms, Jack had learned to shoe horses.¹¹ He was a practical man.

The lack of technology on the farm may have been caused by the tenuous trading position of Wragby Farm within the wider fragile rural economy, which did not, particularly between the two World Wars, generate the surplus capital necessary for investment in more technology. Advances such as the telephone and the motor car would have been a significant added cost bringing dubious benefits; even a tractor would have limited impact on productivity for this mixed farm, whose main income came from its 500 sheep which were run on the moor. Wragby therefore managed with what it already had.

Wragby had become a two-family farm in 1917 when Jack married, and brought home, Hannah Leadill from the nearby village of Harwood Dale, and by 1920 two children, Francis and Ethel, had been born. Casting around for additional income to provide for his growing

⁷ Bernard Grun (ed.), *The Timetables of History* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), 481.

⁸ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 21 November 2000.

family, Jack began to breed horses which he rode at local races, sports and gymkhanas. One of his mares was particularly successful: Creeping Jane, winner of many races including the inaugural Whitby to Sandsend challenge in 1918.¹² This additional income from racing, amounting to ‘a hundred pound or two every year’,¹³ was ‘enough for him to open his first bank account’.¹⁴ Creeping Jane was also a work-horse whose daily round of moving the sheep off the roads and on to the moor gave her six or seven miles of exercise and training every day, keeping her racing fit.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Wragby’s income could not support two families, and by the end of the 1920s Jack had to find some regular work outside the farm, serving a five-year stint ‘leading [carrying] stone on t’road’,¹⁶ ‘leading stone from Flylingthorpe using his own two horses and his own cart – stone for the road’.¹⁷

Some small additional pocket money had continued to be derived from Jack’s singing since he first sang for ‘tanners and bobs’ (sixpences and shillings) at Flask Sports in 1900 when he was nine years old.¹⁸ Thereafter he entered many of the song competitions at Sports events, and sang ‘all over’ with Reggie his brother-in-law at twenty-first birthdays (although Jack did not like singing to Reggie’s melodeon), for a few coins, a few drinks and for ‘a bit of fun’.¹⁹ Jack often sang at hunt meets, after quoits matches, at weddings, at Court Leet meetings, harvest suppers – wherever and whenever the opportunity arose.

His songs were learned ‘off other folks singing ’em, you know. Young uns learnt off t’aud folks’, and particularly from parents: ‘You learnt yours a lot off granddad’, his daughter Ethel prompted. Jack’s father’s brother William was another source of songs. The Beeforth’s were, it is clear, a singing family: ‘I had two brothers and two sisters and we were all good singers, and it just seemed to come to you, it’s a gift, aye. My mother was a good singer and

¹² Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

¹³ Ibid., 10 May 1974.

¹⁴ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

¹⁵ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

¹⁶ Ibid., 20 April 1974.

¹⁷ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

¹⁸ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

¹⁹ Ibid., 20 April 1974.

my father was a good singer, and I had two uncles, well, they were lovely singers on my father's side'.²⁰ 'Stow Brow', a local favourite, was learned from Jack's godmother, Mrs Knowle, probably around the time of World War 1.²¹ Although she was not noted as a singer, Jack's wife Hannah was a self-taught melodeon player, having been introduced to the instrument when a child by her father, a farm worker. Her daughter Ethel Pearson remembered, 'You used to sing and dance i' t' kitchen. People used to come. You'd dance to it', and bizarrely, 'We once danced to "There's a Friend for Little Children" [a hymn]. She played by ear'.²²

Jack Beeforth had been born at Wragby in 1891 (the year of the publication of Frank Kidson's *Traditional Tunes: A Collection of Ballad Airs, Chiefly Obtained in Yorkshire and the South of Scotland*), one of the five surviving children of George Beeforth, a farmer and butcher from Lealholme fifteen kilometres away over the moors, and Emma (née Breckon), a Middlesbrough woman. It was Jack who stayed on to help on the farm and he lived there latterly with his own wife until 1933 when they moved to Cook Farm. Wragby Farm occupied 180 acres of mostly marginal land, four kilometres from the high cliffs at Ravenscar, and nine kilometres or so south of Whitby, on the moorland side of the Whitby – Scarborough A171 road. The enterprise was operated under a mixed-farming regime: up to 500 sheep on the immediate moor and on one hundred acres of sheep-run rented at nearby Helwath ('Elwath'), 10 milking cows and 20 beef cattle, four working- and two riding-horses, half-a-dozen pigs and a few hens. Four dogs helped to move the sheep about and guarded the farm. Root crops were normally turnips and potatoes, and though no wheat was grown the farm did harvest a little oats and barley.²³ Jack regularly went on horseback to the local markets to sell the farm's produce: 'I delivered butter down to Bay [Robin Hood's

²⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

²¹ Ibid., 22 June 1974.

²² Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

²³ Ibid., 9 May 2000.

Bay], carried it down to Bay at nine pence a pound; and eggs 18 pence a dozen. Them was hard times'. At Christmas a few fattened geese and ducks were slaughtered and sold.²⁴

The Osmotherly to Ravenscar sixty-kilometre hike initiated in 1955, the Lyke Wake Walk, comes off Fylingdale Moor at Wragby and Cook Farms. This trek is one of the more serious challenges for many hikers, and such has become its popularity that in some places erosion of the moor has taken place. Thousands of ramblers use the route each year. The many passing walkers, it is interesting to note, have seldom caused any trouble to, or interference in, Wragby's or Cook's farming operations. Jack Beeforth's two grandsons were so attracted to the challenge of the walk that they themselves, years after the family had left Wragby, completed the Lyke Wake Walk.²⁵

In 1933 Jack, now forty one, and his family moved to the neighbouring and smaller fifty-acre Cook Farm. It is odd that Jack seldom spoke of Cook Farm during conversations, although Cook was owned by the Beeforths outright and Wragby was rented. His reminiscences and anecdotes always referred to Wragby as though he had lived nowhere else. The possible reasons for this have been explored earlier in this study. At Cook Farm a mixed-farm economy once more prevailed. The 500 black-face moorland sheep were still run on the rented hundred-acre Helwath stray, and around thirty 'inside' sheep (Leicester crosses) were grazed close to the farm buildings and were folded in the stackyard during lambing. Two work-horses were kept to do general farm work and two ponies helped to work the sheep.²⁶

Jack Beeforth (being 48 years old in 1939) was spared military service during World War 2. Both Francis and Ethel were called up for military service but both were rejected on medical grounds: Francis had flat feet and Ethel reported back to the family that the military doctors had found her to be 'no good for nowt'.²⁷ Jack's universe was bounded by Whitby to

²⁴ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

²⁵ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 13 March 2001.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., Ravenscar, 27 May 2003.

the north and Scarborough and Filey to the south, and although he had often visited villages around the moors to the west playing quoits, racing his horses and hunting, he had never been as far afield as Pickering or Malton, not to mention York. There was no imperative in Jack's life for him to travel out of the area and he did so only once, attending a friend's funeral in Harrogate just before he himself died.

To the east, below Ravenscar, lay the North Sea which Jack could clearly see from the hill behind the farms, but upon which he had never been. The relentless round of the work in any case tied farmer to farm, and during a day away the cows would still have to be milked, the sheep driven off the roads and on to the moor, the horses fed. Jack Beeforth regarded himself, first and foremost, as a farmer but his place in his local social, economic and cultural landscape has carried a wider resonance.

II: Joseph Taylor 1833-1910

In nineteen hundred and eight Joseph Taylor became the first folk-singer to have some of his songs recorded and issued commercially. This leaflet advertising these discs was put out:

English Folk-Songs sung by Genuine Peasant Folk-Singers.

* *

For the first time, records of genuine traditional peasant folksong singing are made available to the public.

These old songs are born out of germs and traditions very many centuries old. They stand for all that is most native and racial in the musical life of Britain, and are the outcome of an unconscious inner productivity, which, uninfluenced by the art music of this or other lands, has gone its own way unnoticed and unapplauded for hundreds of years, humbly and untiringly piling up the great store of British traditional music, that of late years has awaked [sic] the keen interest of great musicians in various countries. It was of settings of these very tunes, sung by Mr. Joseph Taylor, that the late great Norwegian composer and folk-music enthusiast Edward Grieg wrote:-

"Full of genius as they are, they have thrown a clear light upon how the English Folksong is worthy of being lifted up into the 'niveau' of art, thereby to create an independent English music."

... They are folksongs sung by *peasant folksingers themselves*, sung by the very men who have passed such song down the centuries to us.²⁸

Though Grainger, in launching here what he expected to be a series of such records, wrote of a plurality of singers, only Joseph Taylor featured in the records actually produced, singing 'Creeping Jane', 'The White Hare', 'Died for Love'/'Brigg Fair', 'Lord Bateman', 'Murder of Maria Martin'/'Sprig o' Thyme' and 'Worcester City' on six 10-inch discs at 3/6 each, and singing 'Bold William Taylor' on one 12-inch disc at 5/6.

The folksong records did not, alas, sell well and Grainger's hopes of adding another strand to his already burgeoning reputation as concert pianist and recording artist were dashed, for no more discs were made. Moreover, Grainger's somewhat extravagant description of Joseph Taylor as 'peasant' owed more to the Australian's romantic imagination than to any reality, since at the time of the recordings Taylor was working as a bailiff on a large estate.

Joseph Taylor and Percy Grainger had first come into contact at the Brigg Festival in 1905. Grainger, accompanied by his mother, had left his native Australia in 1901, bent on furthering his musical career. The recitals at which he appeared brought him into contact with the well-known tenor, Gervase Elwes, his wife Lady Winifride and her brother the Hon. Everard Feilding [sic] (second son of the eleventh Earl of Denbigh). Grainger's talents had clearly propelled him into the ranks of the social elite, and paradoxically it was through this section of society that encounters with those, like Joseph Taylor, at the other end of the class spectrum began to be made. The Elwes's, from their home at the Manor House, Brigg in Lincolnshire, had been involved in the Brigg Musical Festival since its inception in 1900 and it was perhaps natural that their good friend Percy Grainger should, in 1904, take part. Having been inspired by Lucy Broadwood's famous Folk Song Society lecture 'On Collecting English Folksongs' in March 1905, Grainger soon persuaded the Elwes's to help

²⁸ Percy Grainger, Publicity Leaflet (London: The Gramophone Company Ltd., 31 July 1908).

him in collecting folk songs in their locality, and to include a 'folk song' category in the 1905 Brigg Festival. The prospectus announced:

Class XII Folksong. Open to all

The prize in this class will be given to whoever can supply the best unpublished old Lincolnshire folk song or plough song. The song should be sung or whistled by the competitor, but marks will be allocated for the excellence rather of the song than its actual performance. It is especially requested that the establishment of this class be brought to the notice of old people in the country, who are most likely to remember this kind of song, and that they be urged to come in with the best old song they know.

1st prize: 10/6

2nd prize: 5/-

3rd prize: 2/6²⁹

His attendance at this Village Competition segment of the Brigg Festival was 'the richest experience for Grainger the composer in this period ... At Brigg he made his first contact with the living tradition. The experience was definitive. He responded with passionate enthusiasm, as collector and arranger.'³⁰

The Elwes's and Everard Feilding, too, must have been pleased with the response to the Folk Song Class; 'there was a large list of entrants ... the competition at Brigg on 11th April 1905 proved an unqualified success'.³¹ A local newspaper report of the event (*Lincolnshire Star* 14th October 1905), though identifying fewer entrants, also enthused:

A novel but interesting feature was the singing by old men of dying out Lincolnshire songs. The singing aroused the greatest enthusiasm of the audience ... four competitors turned up, and between them sang about ten songs. Mr. Frank Kidson of Leeds who is a great authority on the subject, awarded the first prize to Joseph Taylor of Saxby for a song called 'Creeping Jane'. The second prize went to W. Hilton, a veteran from Keelby, 85 years of age ... for 'Early one sweet May Morning' and the third prize was awarded to Dean Robinson of Scawby for 'The Old yow with only one horn'.³²

²⁹ John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 117.

³⁰ Kay Dreyfus (ed.), *The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger 1901-14* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 45.

³¹ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair: Joseph Taylor and Other Traditional Lincolnshire Singers Recorded in 1908 by Percy Grainger* (London: Leader LEA4050, 1972), liner notes.

³² Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire* (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1978), 10.

This same newspaper report betrays what may have been some contemporary attitudes to unsophisticated country people, by ridiculing one of the old men while taking the opportunity to publicise the generosity of one of the local nobility:

Hilton ... evidently could have kept on singing for hours. Hilton had worked on the Yarborough estate for more than half a century and is now enjoying a pension of seven shillings a week, given by Lord Yarborough. Hilton, who had a bottle of medicine with a label instructing him to take 'two tablespoons every three hours', was in fine form. (A Keelby visitor says the medicine was whiskey [sic].)

Another reference to this event gives more details of Mr. Hilton's prolonged contribution:

As often with folk-singers, some items in their repertoire seemed to have an endless number of verses and Mr. Hilton produced such a song during the event. When he had been on the platform for what seemed an interminable length of time efforts were made to stop him by the judge and other interested parties, but all was in vain. Eventually someone had to go on to the platform and roar into his ear that the judge had had enough, and, somewhat puzzled, he was escorted down.³³

William Hilton may have entered the singing competition partly in the hope of supplementing his seven shillings a week pension, and he duly succeeded in carrying off the, no doubt welcome, second prize of five shillings. Joseph Taylor's motivation in taking part is more obscure. For Taylor to be appearing on the same platform with those who might want to whistle plough songs was to expose himself to some ridicule, and to align himself with a class he had now left behind. Was he not, as Percy Grainger had written in the *Folk Song Journal*, 'bailiff on a big estate', a 'courteous, genial, typical English countryman, and a perfect artist'?³⁴

Joseph Taylor had been born in 1833 to a poor family in the Wolds village of Binbrook, some twenty miles to the south of Saxby, where his mother had had to keep her family by taking in washing, and he had moved to Saxby in 1863. It is unlikely that Joseph would have

³³ John Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 117.

³⁴ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

had formal education ‘beyond that which was offered by the local Sunday school’.³⁵ The recent discovery by Ruairidh Greig that in 1854 Joseph spent three months in prison ‘convicted for stealing wheat cake and powder from Binbrook farmer William Croft’, suggests that Joseph’s later employer, if aware of this episode, could have sensed opportunities to assert a heightened power of patronage over him. Joseph’s later compliant and conventional career and some of the antipathy felt towards him by a number of his fellow singers may spring from their knowledge of this crime.

By 1871, now an agricultural labourer thirty seven years old, and having a wife and six children to support, he began to move through the jobs of carpenter and joiner for a tradesman who worked for a large local estate, then in 1875 Joseph joined the estate of the Hope Burton family of the Hall and finally became under-steward there. Joseph’s course of upward social mobility took in membership of the choir at Saxby church for forty five years and appointment as Parish Clerk in Saxby from 1874 to 1906 with a salary of £10 per annum, the duties including ‘winding the church clock, gravedigging, collecting the church rate from cottages, and the all-important task of responding “Amen” in the church services’.³⁶ Here was no simple country yokel. Why, then, Taylor’s need to put his dignity and good standing at risk by entering an event which might have been regarded by some as vulgar, rustic and passé? Percy Grainger himself gave a splenetic view on how folk song in England had been widely judged:

Had rural England not hated its folksong this form of music would not have been in the process of dying out and would not have needed to be ‘rescued from oblivion’ by townified highbrows such as myself and my fellow collectors. As a general rule the younger kin of the old folksingers not only hated folksong in the usual way ... but, further more, fiercely despised the

³⁵ Ruairidh Greig, ‘Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire: a biography of a singer’, I. Russell and D. Atkinson (eds), *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 2004), 387.

³⁶ Ibid. Greig understates here the importance of the musical input of a Parish Clerk’s duty in leading the responses in Church of England services.

folk singing habits of their old uncles and grandfathers as revealing social backwardness and illiteracy in their families.³⁷

However, the Elwes's enthusiasm for their Brigg competitions saw them combing the countryside around calling on churches, schools and the local gentry, during the months before the event, for possible entrants and support. Joseph Taylor would have had to sustain a double pressure on his attendance at the competitions – for he was both a choir member and an individual folk singer, though this may have served to halve the weight of the responsibility of solo singing (since he was attending anyway); there was clearly no excuse for Joseph not being at the venue. If the Elwes's (as is likely), had solicited support from his employer Mr. Hope Burton, Joseph may have had through him further encouragement to sing, and indeed would have been flattered to be pressed by so many members of the gentry. Flattery may have also been used to persuade Taylor to take part to induce others through his good standing in the local community. Here, for him, would be a good opportunity to give an airing to those old songs of his youth and childhood, some of which he had learned from gypsies back in Binbrook. Moreover, he must have been aware that he had a pleasing voice which he was used to exercising every Sunday. Certainly Percy Grainger thought so:

... [he had] the purest possible style of folk-song singing. Though his memory for words is not uncommonly good, his mind is a seemingly unlimited storehouse of melodies, which he swiftly recalls at the merest mention of the titles; and his versions are generally distinguished by the beauty of their melodic curves and the symmetry of their construction. He relies on more purely vocal effects than almost any folk-singer I have ever come across. His dialect and his treatment of the narrative points are not so exceptional; but his effortless high notes, sturdy rhythms, clean unmistakable intervals, and his twiddles and 'bleating' ornaments (invariably executed with unflinching grace and neatness) are irresistible ... Nothing could be more refreshing than his hale countrified looks and the happy lilt of his cheery voice.³⁸

Taylor's success in carrying off first prize in the competition had vindicated his decision to enter in 1905; when the 1906 competition time arrived the organisers had the entrants'

³⁷ Percy Aldridge Grainger, *Program-Note on "Lincolnshire Posy": English Folksongs Gathered in Lincolnshire (England) by Lucy E. Broadwood and Percy Aldridge Grainger and Set for Wind Band (Military Band)* (August 1939), 2.

³⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

names printed in the programme – Class XIII Folk Song – and the list gave fourteen entrants. Joseph Taylor’s name was not among them. He may have been prevailed upon to take part at the last moment to make the numbers seem respectable, because he is recorded as having not only taken part but as taking second prize among the nine actual entrants. The press reports were once again part praising, part scathing and patronising: ‘It was something of a feat to obtain 14 entries and to secure ... nine veterans to warble the ballads they learned in their youth ... “Brigg Fair” and a beautiful tune to “William Taylor” obtained the [second] prize for Mr. Joseph Taylor (*Yorkshire Post* 6 May 1906).’³⁹

The concluding part of the day’s content was half an hour devoted to the singing of folk songs by a number of veterans of North Lincolnshire. These interesting old gentlemen came forth with more or less self-control (or nervousness) as the case might be, to troll out some of the songs of their early youth ... Mr. Taylor reeled off a lyric entitled ‘Brigg Fair’.⁴⁰

The Folk Song Class was never repeated; but Joseph Taylor’s ‘Brigg Fair’ was beginning to metamorphose into something quite different from his peasant song, at the hands of two celebrated musicians:

[Frederick] Delius had written advising Grainger that he would be in London on 1 October [1907], bringing with him his newest work, ‘...a “Brigg fair”, English Rhapsody’, which was based in part on the tune Grainger had collected from Joseph Taylor in 1905/06. Grainger had given Delius a copy of his own setting of Brigg Fair (published by Forsyth in 1906) earlier in their association.’⁴¹

A few months later, in March 1908, Thomas Beecham was to conduct a performance of the Delius ‘Rhapsody’ at Queen’s Hall. Among the audience were Delius himself, Percy Grainger and his mother, the Hon Everard Feilding and Joseph Taylor, whose expenses had been paid by Feilding. Grainger was overjoyed. ‘Think what the dear Feilding has done! He

³⁹ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴¹ Kay Dreyfus, *The Farthest North of Humanness*, 136.

has paid the journey all the way from Lincs for old Taylor so that he can hear his melodies on a big orchestra ... What a pure dear good nature that Feilding!'⁴²

Joseph Taylor's reaction to hearing his song arranged and performed orchestrally has been variously reported: 'When "his" tune rang out after preludial doodlings, Joseph, rising to his feet, sang along with the orchestra. The incident must have caused some consternation among the audience, not to mention the concert-hall attendants.'⁴³ 'Legend has it that on hearing "his" tune, Joseph Taylor immediately stood up and began to sing along with the orchestra ... this was Joseph Taylor's day, a day when high art made a low and respectful bow to its humble folk origins.'⁴⁴ But Grainger and the others in the party would know Joseph Taylor to be 'neither illiterate nor socially backward'.⁴⁵ As a long-time member of a choir who had sung many times at musical competitions, Taylor knew how to behave at concerts and his day-to-day interaction with the gentry through his job as steward would have made him well at ease within this audience.

Somewhat prosaically, Grainger, in a letter written the next day to his lover Karen Holten, describes Taylor's more contained though self-conscious reaction to this performance: '... the old man became red with pride when he recognised his song ... and said "It's just it" or "It's the best of the lot", although he also thought well of the Masters[ingers] overture'.⁴⁶ Here was a 'real tame peasant who could be relied upon not to say the wrong thing at the wrong time'.⁴⁷

More is known about Joseph Taylor than almost any other singer of his genre and time, thanks to Percy Grainger with whom he is inextricably linked, and Grainger's desire to record the whole man and not just his songs. H. G. Wells, accompanying Percy on a folksong

⁴² Kay Dreyfus, *The Farthest North of Humanness*, 203.

⁴³ W. Mellers, *Percy Grainger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 69.

⁴⁴ John Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 126.

⁴⁵ Percy Grainger, "Lincolnshire Posy", 2.

⁴⁶ Kay Dreyfus, *The Farthest North of Humanness*, 203.

⁴⁷ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 68.

hunt in Gloucestershire, observed that Grainger noted down not merely ‘the music and the dialect of the songs, but also many characteristic scraps of banter that passed between the old agriculturalists’. When he remarked that Percy seemed to be notating not merely song, but also a way of life, the musician retorted that there was no distinction.⁴⁸

Despite Grainger’s fast-developing skills with phonograph recording, the technology in Taylor’s time allowed only short recordings to be made, which precluded discursive conversation on them. Moreover, Grainger’s busy life of concert performer, composer and arranger did not allow him to spend much time with his folk singers. We do not, therefore, know where Taylor learnt most of his songs – ‘Creeping Jane’ perhaps from an old woman in Binbrook when he was eleven, ‘Brigg Fair’ perhaps from the gypsies at Binbrook – or at what venues and on which occasions did he (or any of his fellow Lincolnshire singers) sing them, or to what uses they were put. If any references to public-house singing were ever made to Grainger he has silently expunged them from all published notes, and no visits to pubs by him seem ever to have been recorded, although he energetically cycled around that flat terrain visiting known singers’ houses; whether Joseph Taylor had ever sung in pubs in earlier times, it would by then have been considered an unseemly thing for a man in his now senior position to do. Joseph’s fellow singers, perhaps resentful of his gramophone records and ‘Brigg Fair’ fame, were known to have criticised him for not being able to remember all the words of his songs – memory lapses springing, perhaps, from the too few occasions during his later years when he would have sung or practised them.

Joseph Taylor has been considered by some to be atypical of vernacular singers chiefly because of his singular singing style and his social position which put him outside the ‘peasant’ class the Edwardian romanticist had claimed for him. However, the singers we are considering, as we shall later see, share at least some class characteristics with Joseph which set them, in some ways, apart from the pure wage earner. Joseph Taylor was still an active

⁴⁸ W. Mellers, *Percy Grainger*, 75.

man right up to the end, which came while he was driving an estate trap on estate business.

The Star on the 10th May 1910 reported his death:

Saxby – fatal sequel to accident – On Wednesday Joseph Taylor aged 78 years the local steward for Mr. Hope Burton of the Hall died somewhat suddenly. Deceased, it appears, whilst driving out on Tuesday was thrown out of the trap on to the horse, through the animal shying at something on the road. The man, though bruised on the shoulder, continued his further five mile drive, and drove back again a further 10 miles. After fetching some cows from a field he complained of several pains in the pit of his stomach, and went to bed. Dr. Morley, of Barton, was sent for, but before his arrival death had taken place.⁴⁹

He left effects of £181.18s.8d.⁵⁰

III: Walter William Pardon 1914-1996

A common strand in the motivations for people to learn songs may be the desire for such people to perform to others.

Every sound intentionally made is instinctively taken to be an attempt at communication ...In the presence of sound intentionally produced, we feel ourselves within another person's ambit. And that feeling conditions our response to what we hear.⁵¹

For Walter Pardon, however, singing occasions when he would have had the opportunity, some might say, good reason, to communicate through his singing gradually diminished throughout his life until he had reached almost sixty. How a man not especially noted as a singer, even within his family, had managed to carry his large repertory of songs through to old age and had retained (or more likely had developed) a distinctive, subtly ornamented and pleasing style of singing while having little scope to display his accomplishment to others, is one of the remarkable features of this singer's personal narrative.

Scruton's position asserting that every performance implies a listener, invites us to look for Walter Pardon's audience for much of the middle part of his life as something other than

⁴⁹ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵¹ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 18.

a tangible reality, and more perhaps as a retrospective gathering made up of family and friends of days gone by; in this imagined assembly would be featured all the characters who used, at Christmas, to sit and sing at each side of the table and under the ‘baulk’ – the heavy beam that ran along the Pardon’s cottage ceiling. Singing responsibilities would alternate between those on ‘your side’, then ‘our side’, of the baulk between Uncles Billy, Bob and Tom Gee, his Aunt Alice, Uncle Walter and cousin Hubert and his mother and father and the rest, as many as twenty people who had to be accommodated for the Christmas tea in two sittings.

Uncle Billy, from whom Walter Pardon learned most of his songs, had died in 1942 and Walter’s mother, Emily Pardon (née Gee) whose table provided the important set pieces for the singing events, had by her death in 1953 left a personal void for Walter, an only child and life-long bachelor, and had ended for ever the Pardon/Gee Christmas gatherings. It is clear that most of Walter Pardon’s extensive repertory of over 150 songs had been learned by the time he was twenty eight and that the opportunities for hearing them performed had ended when he was thirty nine. *Hearing* them performed is right, because although he was always an active listener at the Christmas table, chances for him to sing were limited:

I never did sing a lot of the old folk songs, not then – not with the older ones alive. That was their perk. They always sang their own songs, you see. Uncle Bob Gee would sing ‘Jones’s Ale’, that was his song. Tom Gee always sang the ‘Bonny Bunch of Roses’ – no one else would sing that or dare. They had special songs they sung. The brothers would never sing what another brother sung, nor would they like anyone else to. So I had to sing what no one else wanted to. ‘The Dark-Eyed Sailor’, I was allowed to sing that – no one else wanted to and I always liked that song so that went all right with me. ‘When the Fields are White with Daisies’, that sort of thing – ‘The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill’, ‘In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree’- they were more modern songs what they never bothered about.⁵²

The six Pardons and twelve Gees of Walter Pardon’s immediate family all lived in Knapton, a village two miles from the sea and in this essentially rural landscape they made

⁵² Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father* (Stroud: Musical Traditions MTCD305-6, 2000), booklet, 4.

their livings, mainly as agricultural workers; creeping gentrification in this part of the north east Norfolk coast had recently given further manual employment by the development of a Golf Links close to the shore at Mundesley. If all the male members of both sides of the family had been 'farm labourers of one kind or another for as far back as anyone could remember',⁵³ Walter did not follow in the family tradition, since he was put apprentice at fourteen to a carpenter in the nearby village of Paston and spent all his life, including four years' military service in World War 2, initially at Aldershot, as a carpenter. Why Walter's parents chose this trade for him rather than agriculture is not recorded but (unusually for that place, time and class) as he was an only child, it is likely that something more secure and less burdensome than a farm labouring job would have been sought.

One reason Walter did not go into farming is suggested in the following anecdote Walter told to Mike Yates:

One afternoon when Walter was still a schoolboy his father came home after work angry that his land-owner employer had cause to complain that Walter had not displayed to him the proper obeisance to a man of his social position. His father's anger, Walter said, was directed not so much at Walter but at the social structures which upheld such attitudes.⁵⁴

Mike Yates concludes that it is possible (or probable) that local landowners, seeing the unrest among farmworkers around the area, were trying to reinforce the *status quo* by asserting some discipline over the families of their employees.

Moreover, much of the essential and urgent work on the farm was done 'by the piece' imposing even more onerous psychological and physical stresses upon the farm labourer:

The 1919 Commission on the Economic Prospects of Agriculture listed hoeing turnips and mangolds, drilling, turnip-pulling, muck spreading, threshing, haysel (hay harvest), corn harvest, rick-thatching and sheep-washing as all being done by the piece in Norfolk. To this list we can add weeding corn and roots, harvesting potatoes and sugar-beet pulling. All these

⁵³ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 1.

⁵⁴ Notes on conversation: Mike Yates, Rosebank Cottage, Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed. 25 November 2003.

jobs were bargained for – the price was set between master and man – and this is where conflict arose.⁵⁵

Conflict over individual bargains may have been soon forgotten where a farmer and his labourers sensed that there was some counterbalancing of the outcomes, where now the farmer, now the labourer got the better deal; in 1923 however – Walter Pardon was nine years old – a far more serious structural conflict between organised farming and its workforce took place in Norfolk, when farmers, experiencing collapsing market prices, tried to impose new pay structures upon their labourers: an increase in working hours from 50 to 54 hours per week and a reduction in wages from 27s 9d to 24s 9d per week. The resulting strike involved much activity in Knapton (Walter's village) and in the villages around. Billy Dixon (b.1894) himself from Knapton and who lived through the times as labourer and team-man, described some of the events:

... So as soon as we got the strike on, ours was the headquarters at Trunch [a village two miles away], we met there nine o'clock of the mornings, one of them had an old trumpet you know, from the war, blew up give them call all around. Up would come the bikes, Gimmingham, Paston, Knapton; Trunch Hill was full of bicycles. Off we'd go, 'Where we going to?' 'We'll go to Southrepps, Thorpe, Roughton, all round'. 'Right, when we get to Southrepps, you chaps that, like Paston, anybody's like working on the land'. Pulled up on the bikes, way they'd go half-a-dozen across, cut the reins through ... shoot the cart up and turn the horse off, and they could go where they liked ... We didn't go to the same village and do that if they were working, put the strangers there, then we done it when we go where we weren't known.⁵⁶

This early use of the flying picket weapon (which the National Union of Agricultural Workers called 'cycle scouts'), meant that tensions in agricultural relationships between boss and worker were experienced at first hand by many families in this part of Norfolk; it is easy to imagine Thomas and Emily Pardon wanting a different future for their son Walter, and perhaps deciding then and there to put him to a useful trade when his schooling days were done. Improvements in the road system to carry the increasing motor traffic also made it

⁵⁵ Alun Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk 1870-1923* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 163, 165.

easier for artisans on their bicycles (which had become much cheaper, and ownership more common, after the war) to widen their job-opportunity horizons; a good craftsman would be able to offer his skills in a wide radius from his home in this flat terrain, so to the carpenter's trade Walter went: 'I was the only one of the family who went in for carpentry, all the rest were farm-hands – on the farm all day, and when they weren't, they were talking about it.'⁵⁷

Those who met Walter Pardon knew him as a reserved man: 'his approach was predominantly quiet, even introspective',⁵⁸ 'modest ... quietly spoken and outwardly rather shy',⁵⁹ 'Walter's natural ease of manner, modesty, sense of humour and thoughtful conversation made him a wonderful companion',⁶⁰ 'Walter Pardon's style of singing reflected his personality – he was a sensitive, private man, whose impersonal singing let the song speak for itself'.⁶¹ His job as a peripatetic carpenter, often working on his own for a wide range of customers, suited a man of his self-contained yet personable nature, at first reflecting his only-child individuality, and gradually forming the mature, somewhat reticent personality who lived his bachelor life alone, but not lonely, from his fortieth year.

Though Walter had no siblings, the Pardon household was a busy one since two bachelor uncles (his mother's brothers) also lived in the cottage, and Walter became the focus of attention for all the four adults in the house, especially for Uncle Billy Gee who began to teach him his own songs. It was from the mother's side of the family that these songs were carried; her father was well known as a singer and he had a very wide repertoire:

... Billy Gee. He was an outstanding fellow. He was born here in this house. I learned nearly all my songs off him; he was born in 1863. Most of the songs he got from my grandfather ... he knew a hundred my grandfather did ... When he died he took a lot with him ... sitting on my uncle's knee. That's the truth, that's how I used to learn 'em. He used to lift me up, and I'd sit looking up at him while he sung.⁶²

⁵⁷ Peter Bellamy, 'Walter Pardon', *Folk Review*, 3:10 (1974), 10.

⁵⁸ Roy Palmer, *The Guardian*, 21 June 1996, 17.

⁵⁹ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 7.

⁶⁰ Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, *FMJ* 7:2 (1996), 264-5.

⁶¹ Derek Schofield, *The Independent*, 13 June 1996, 27.

⁶² Peter Bellamy, *Folk Review*, 10-15.

During the Depression in the late nineteen twenties and the nineteen thirties, it seemed as though the decision to put Walter to a trade had been ill-advised, for, only a few years into his career, he was finding it hard to get work. Over at the Golf Links at Mundesley, the Depression was also causing Uncle Billy to be laid off his part-time groundsman job. With time on their hands and a close relationship bound by their love of the songs, Uncle Billy sang some of their idle time away, while Walter listened and copied out the words.

My Uncle and I have sung in one of the sheds, we used to go in there sometimes and have a song, in one of our sheds. We used to sit in there, when he got an old man [Uncle Billy died in 1942 when he was seventy nine], never had much money, neither had I, that was a bad Depression, you see, in the trade. I was out of work. We perhaps used to get a little whisky and have a drop in there, cold weather, and we'd sing these songs together that I'd learnt from him, the songs that I sing now.⁶³

Walter Pardon's motivation in wanting to listen to, and note, all the songs, when he himself would seldom have the platform on which to sing them (perhaps only once a year at Christmas time), needs to be examined. As the sole child at the Christmas festivities, he was in a privileged position, and the songs were attached to an event of good humour and comparative plenty. The songs themselves were repeated year after year and became irremovably connected with the particular person who sang each individual song. Memorising the songs and committing them to paper slips and exercise books was to select and keep a store of pleasurable memories, which could be recovered at will or come unbidden, and we may suppose that the songs were noted so that they could be constantly silently reprised in Walter's imagination; perhaps, too, he nursed a yearning to be one of the prominent singers at the Christmas table, when the older folk had died, to preserve the continuity, tradition and family history that he had always experienced around him.

He was aided in putting together the songs – which he had never sung – by his prodigious memory. He could remember local lore and events not only from his own experience but which had been recounted to him by his elders. It was sometimes not until later that you realised you had been listening to a tale of

⁶³ Karl Dallas & Pat Mackenzie, *Folk News* (August 1977), 14-15.

something that had happened before Walter was born. He could recall long-vanished field names, dialect words and names of animals, farm implements etc.⁶⁴

Walter Pardon certainly had a keen sense of history, once gently challenging an interviewer: 'I was apprenticed in the next village here – Paston. You've heard of the Paston Letters, have you?'⁶⁵ The interviewer did not take up the question so missed the opportunity for Walter to show his understanding of these documents, their content and what relevance and meaning, if any, he thought they had to a man of his class.

The letters of the wealthy Paston family of Norfolk for the years 1422 – 1509 are of enormous value as a straightforward personal account of three generations of their life and times ... Domestic life, leisure habits, social occasions, and what educated people read; business matters and the process of law; and the violence which prevailed in those troubled times – all can be found in the letters of the Paston family.⁶⁶

Clearly, Walter Pardon was aware of these letters. We should not be surprised if he knew something of their content, for as more than one visitor to his Knapton home has recorded, he was a 'keen',⁶⁷ 'avid',⁶⁸ reader with a retentive memory; his knowledge of, and interest in, the past is shown by his references, in recorded conversations, to the local tithe barn (Towey's Barn – 1581) and to the local village church: 'it's got the finest roof in the county, double-hammer beam, with about 140 angels in'.⁶⁹

Country singers of songs of this genre have almost always found a ready convivial audience in the bar or parlour of a local pub; performing in such a place was never to Walter's taste and between Christmas 1952 and 1973 his singing was never heard outside his home and, as he lived alone, seldom by any others within it: 'I never did go into the pub much with him [Uncle Billy] ... I never did like pub bars, I never did go in much or drink much beer. I never was keen on that sort of thing. I never did sing in a pub anyhow, not in a

⁶⁴ Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, *Walter Pardon 1997 Lecture Notes*, 4.

⁶⁵ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 3.

⁶⁶ Michael Stapleton (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature* (Cambridge: Book Club Associates, 1983), 676.

⁶⁷ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 7.

⁶⁸ Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, *FMJ* 7:2 (1996), 264-5.

⁶⁹ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 3.

bar, not if they asked me to, not now. I like a room when it's peace and quiet, that's what I like'.⁷⁰ The place where he would find this peace and quiet and where he would sing and play his melodeon was his own cottage where he lived alone; and this he continued to do, crafting and shaping the songs for no one's pleasure but his own, until he was 'discovered' by the folk revival in the early 1970s. 'I still play that, have done for years, in here all alone on a Saturday night, never missed. I sometimes sit on the stairs and play, so people can't hear me'.⁷¹

Were it not for a young relation who asked him to tape-record a few of his songs which were passed on to a revivalist singer, Walter may have died in obscurity. His subsequent relative celebrity found him in 1973 for the first time in his 59 years singing outside his family circle and Knapton cottage. At the presentation of the Gold Badge awarded in 1983 by the English Folk Dance and Song Society for Walter's 'generosity in the sharing with us your repertoire of songs and experiences', an extract from the citation stated:

Walter, of course, took all this [celebrity] in his stride; the records, articles, visitors, Folk Clubs and Festivals and even going to America! For in 1976, Walter was a member of the British Folk Company that took part in the Festival of American Folklore, organised by the Smithsonian Institution as part of the United States Bi-Centennial Celebrations.⁷²

We do not know whether Walter felt that recognition had vindicated and rewarded his years of solitary singing; it is more likely that he was surprised and a little puzzled. Walter Pardon has, however, shown that the preservation and development of his vernacular music in performance has not required an audience of current listeners, nor even some future audience for which he was in some way in constant rehearsal. In this way he was unique. 'My father was the last one to die [1955], and when I was left here on my own, that was

⁷⁰ Karl Dallas & Pat Mackenzie, *Folk News*, 14.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² S. A. Mathews, 'Gold Badge Award citation', EFDSS, 12 November 1983.

melancholy; that's why I had it all changed in here, to make a different atmosphere. Yes I do miss those good old times'.⁷³

IV: Frank Hinchliffe 1923-1995

In Frank Hinchliffe, as in the other singers we are considering, we clearly see the archetype for A. L. Lloyd's English 'folk singer':

The folk singers and makers of folk song would be found mainly among the small farmers, cottagers and farm-servants. And even here the repertory would not be all of a piece, for some songs and singing styles would be associated with beggars, gypsies and folk at the poorest ends of the village, and the small farmers, artisans and others with pretensions to respectability would be likely to deplore these items and manners as rude and ignorant. Below a certain economic level it is hard to make clear distinction between the various classes in the village, and perhaps the best dividing line can be drawn between those who made their living mainly as farmers and those who made their living mainly as labourers.⁷⁴

Like Joseph Taylor's linkage to one person, Percy Grainger, Frank Hinchliffe's name has been chiefly associated with Ian Russell, as most of the written testimony of Frank's life and music has been produced by Russell, since their first meeting during work on behalf of the Survey of Language and Folklore for Sheffield University in 1970. But in his detailed contextualised study of Frank Hinchliffe and other vernacular singers in the West Sheffield area, Russell, unlike Grainger, sought to place the emphasis of his work on the context of the songs: the essence of the man or woman who sang the songs; the singer's corpus; the responses, reaction and repercussions in both the audience and the local community to the songs; the meanings that the songs carried for the singer; the distinguishing features of performance between the different singers. Scholarship in popular culture by the early 1970s had already begun to reject the idea that folk song 'trophy' collection was a productive activity; a text was not seen now merely as a text but, as Richard Dorson saw it: '... an event in time in which a tradition is performed or communicated. Hence the whole performance or

⁷³ Peter Bellamy, *Folk Review*, 11.

⁷⁴ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 215.

communicative act must be recorded. The collector can no longer simply write down or tape record a text, for the text is only part of each unique event.'⁷⁵ Moreover, Russell did not see the culture he found in the locality as quaint survivalism which may therefore have been only of antiquarian interest; his study of singing by Frank Hinchliffe and others embraced not only past and present social and personal inter-relationships, but also the continuing and more immediate aspects of change and adaptation, stability and continuity.

Frank Hinchliffe lived in Crosspool/Fulwood area of West Sheffield for all of his life in a locality which, although only five or six kilometres from the centre of one of England's largest industrial cities, is 'an area in which suburban and rural features come in to contact and intermingle'.⁷⁶ Frank regarded himself as a countryman. Like fellow farmer and singer Jack Beeforth over on the north-east Yorkshire coast, he had been brought up on a small farm, newly tenanted in the early 1920s by his father who had been until then a corporation carter. Frank left school at fourteen and had never left the district. Rooted in the inexorable circularity of farm tasks, he had, like Jack Beeforth, seldom been away even on holiday, seemingly finding his contentment within his own community and landscape. The feeling of ease within himself is, Ian Russell suggests, idealised in one of his songs:

I tramp with my gun in my pocket
My little dog trots by my side,
And the moon shining brightly above me,
I sing to the swing of my stride.

O, I wouldn't change my life for no-one,
Not even a great millionaire,
A great bag of gold would not tempt me,
Nor a sweet maiden's life for to share.⁷⁷

Unhappily, the small dairy business which the Hinchliffes operated from their farm at Clough Fields became unviable with the introduction, in 1960, of compulsory inoculation against tuberculosis for all dairy cattle and the attendant costs. (Coincidentally, Jack Beeforth

⁷⁵ Richard Dorson, *Folklore – Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 13.

⁷⁶ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1977), 23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

retired from farming in the same year.) The Hinchliffe family turned from dairying to raising beef; but by 1968 this attempt at diversification also failed, the farm had to be given up and the Hinchliffes' social trajectory sank back into the labouring ranks whence it had risen. Frank took a job with the Water Authority and he stayed with them until his retirement. Compensations stemmed from this new work for a man who had been his own master for so long: many of the required tasks were those with which he was familiar – the drystone walling, the mowing and the planting – and most of it was outside; Frank gained the companionship of his co-workers and a regular wage; the shorter working week allowed him to help out on a neighbouring farm for a few hours each day, keeping him in touch with farming and allowing him to believe that he was still really a farmer. But the rheumatoid arthritis which had earlier forced him (as he would have wanted to believe) out of farming, made him retire early from the Water Authority and 'latterly made him a prisoner within his own home'.⁷⁸

Walter Pardon and, it is argued, Joseph Taylor were no lovers of pub singing. Frank Hinchliffe and Jack Beeforth, however, had found the public house to be an outlet for the singing of the songs they had learned earlier at home on the farm, and as a source of new material which they progressively added to their repertoire. Frank had learned most of the songs that his parents (both of them singers) had known, by the time he was old enough to go into a pub. The Hinchliffe family were well known as singers in the district between the First and Second World Wars, when Sunday nights were spent in singing around the harmonium. Passers by, it was recalled, would be able to hear the hymns being sung for, although they were not a particularly religious family, there would be no secular music on a Sunday at the Hinchliffes. Frank was to carry forward this sober, rather strait-laced posture through life, for his repertoire contains little comic or even humorous material. 'He sings no bawdy songs and

⁷⁸ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1 (1995), 123.

claims to know none, although he knows of others who sing them',⁷⁹ and this is often not the case for farmers, it sometimes being argued that their proximity to the natural world tends to allay any embarrassment at themes of carnality or dissoluteness that may feature in some songs. Some of this natural world was to be found in the milking shed, where Frank was not only learning his father's songs but rehearsing them against the time when he would be the performer. The tedious and fatiguing twice-a-day, two-hour stint of manual milking needed something to pass away the time and singing provided it.

When war came, most of the young men were drafted into the military but Frank being in farming – a reserved occupation – was left with the comradeship of mostly older men. In 1941, now eighteen and legally able to go into pubs, he found, particularly in the Plough at Sandygate, the Sportsman at Lodge Moor and the Peacock at Knowle Top, a metier which suited him, a coterie of fellow singers with a different range of songs, an audience which valued and encouraged his singing and a round of venues where he could extend his acquaintanceships and his repertoire. 'Just during war years there were more or less only old uns that were at 'ome, d'you see, more older company. I think there were more singing then like, than there's been since young uns have been knocking about'.⁸⁰

There was obvious eclecticism in Frank's sources. As well as learning all his father's and his mother's songs, he also took some of his songs from his uncles – his mother's brothers Tom and Sam White – who were well known singers locally. Other local singers like Riley Marsden and Andrew Gregory, from whom he got 'The Nobleman and the Thresherman', provided him with one or two songs as did itinerant workers, from one of whom Frank learned 'The Wild Colonial Boy'. Frank admitted to learning only one song, 'The Letter Edged in Black' sung by Slim Whitman, from a gramophone record. His single attempt at song-writing in which he poked fun at a neighbour, Steve Fox, prosecuted for a traffic

⁷⁹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 79.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

offence, was not well received. The 'keen sense of humour'⁸¹ which Russell had detected clearly did not transfer itself to either authorship or delivery in this case. The Christmas carols sung in pubs around the Sheffield area were to Frank an important part of his repertory – there were forty of them – although for him only to be sung at Christmas and only in chorus, hence his criticism of another singer: 'He'll sing owt, you can choose what time of year he's not bothered, I don't think he realises what he's singing about. When he's singing Christmas carols, he's no meaning attached to it.'⁸²

Frank Hinchliffe's position in his songs and their singing contains some contradictions. He had a 'keen sense of humour' (though Russell's illustration of it: 'D'you know, we could sing you old songs for a week', does not greatly convince), yet sings no humorous, comic or bawdy songs; or again he is a performer 'with a droll sense of humour', and this time no example is adduced.⁸³ Perhaps the lampooning piece already referred to was an example of his drollery. The Hinchliffes' stance on Sunday observance showed inconsistencies. No musical secularity was allowed into the home on Sunday, yet the family and some of their friends spent happy evenings in what many religious people would consider to be a temple of profanity, the public house, singing the carols at Christmastime, and sometimes not only at Christmas.

The pub, since he was old enough to drink in it, had been the social centre for Frank Hinchliffe, who was used to calling in at his local (usually the Sportsman at Lodge Moor) a couple of times a week. The old layout of this, and other singing pubs in the locality, had featured small rooms each with its own coal fire, where men in their working clothes on the way from work had not been made to feel ill at ease. The situation began to change swiftly in the 1970s when breweries began to see opportunities to increase their revenues; this they did by attracting a new, more affluent and mobile clientele through adopting open-plan layouts,

⁸¹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 69.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 77.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 69.

upgrading facilities and selling heavily advertised new ‘products’. The Sportsman itself was renovated in 1974⁸⁴ and, although singing continued, the pub would never again offer the conditions essential for acoustic, unaccompanied singers, now having to compete against the hubbub of a reluctant, transient audience. Even at its most accommodating, the pub has provided a fragile ambience for such singers; some time earlier in the 1930s in Norfolk, Harry Cox and his friends ‘walked out of the pub [the King’s Arms in Ludham] because of constant interruption by some rowdy young men’.⁸⁵ In some public houses, it was the landlord who would curtail the singing, as Walter Pardon remembered being told by one of his uncles: ‘Tom ... he used to sing “The Cobbler” mostly ... another bawdy old song, “Cock-a-Doodle-do”. Another one was “I Wish They’d Do it Now” ... “The Bush of Australia” ... He told me that used to be stopped in public houses, some of the landlords would ban that – that was a banned song.’⁸⁶

For Frank Hinchliffe and his friends in the Sportsman at Lodge Moor on a Saturday night the singers had been used to the indulgence of after-hours drinking and singing sessions, when a knot of interested locals would loiter behind after the strangers had left. In this way the group avoided any possible hostile mockery from those who were not part of their clique, and in any case, by the time official closing came around singers were in convivial mood. By 1970 the late singing concession came to an end; the police, responding to complaints, prohibited singing at the Peacock, Knowle Top, and it stopped. The singers suffered ridicule and one of them told Ian Russell: ‘We’ve been the laughing stock in this village ... When we’ve ’ad a pot or 2, hear us sing – we’ll sing. There’s a lot enjoys it. Nobody can stop us. We got a bad name, that’s our crime ... Nobody can say a thing wrong about us, but we sing when we’ve ’ad some beer. Fighting, they could grumble.’⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 85.

⁸⁵ Christopher Heppa, ‘Harry Cox’s Friends & Fellow Singers’, 30.

⁸⁶ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 4.

⁸⁷ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 128-9.

As social and musical fashions moved on, similar experiences were being felt by other singers elsewhere. Walter Pardon, in Norfolk, commented: 'They ridiculed the old men. They'd start to sing and the young ones would just tell 'em to shut up. And that's the truth.'⁸⁸ Walter would have been unaffected by such derision since he did not go into pubs to sing, but for Frank Hinchliffe and his singing friends it seems to have had unhappy consequences. Two of the singers, George Hancock and Stanley Marsden (close friend and brother-in-law of Frank), felt as though they had been driven out of the pubs and by 1976 Frank himself had stopped going out to them for 'there was simply nowhere left for him to go'.⁸⁹ Yet this feeling of alienation from a new generation by an older one was no new phenomenon for folk song, for Cecil Sharp had noted it seventy years earlier:

The folk-singers of today [1907] ... are the last of a long line that stretches back into the mists of far off days. Their children were the first of their race to reject the songs of their forefathers. Nowadays, the younger generations despised them, and, when they mention them, it is with a lofty and supercilious air and to pour ridicule upon them. The old singers, of course, hold the modern songs in like contempt, although they accept the changed conditions with a quiet dignity, which is not without its pathos. One old singer once said to me, 'Our tunes be out o' vashion. They young volk come a-zingin' thicky comic zongs, and I don't know they, and they won't hearken to my old-vashioned zongs.' The old order changeth, and the old singers realise that their day has gone and that they and their songs are 'out o' vashion.'⁹⁰

For Frank Hinchliffe and Walter Pardon, at least, the English folk revival of the second half of the twentieth century provided a performing arena, denied to Sharp's old singers, where their old fashioned accomplishments were recognised, admired and applauded. Frank sang at the National Folk Festival at Sutton Bonnington in 1978, 1987 and 1990,⁹¹ and Walter Pardon was invited to Washington DC for the Bicentennial Festival of American Folklife.⁹² The attentive and respectful folk club and concert-hall audiences hear the words and the tunes of the songs which a singer like Frank Hinchliffe had been singing for his

⁸⁸ Mike Yates, 'Walter Music', *Folk Roots*, 7:4 (1985), 15-16.

⁸⁹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 186.

⁹⁰ Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, 106.

⁹¹ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1 (1995), 124.

⁹² Shirley Cherkasky (Smithsonian Institution), letter to Walter Pardon, 3 May 1976.

family and friends for most of his life; now robbed of the evoked context of the songs' earlier incarnations, each listener is left to explore, wring out and manipulate afresh their renewed personal meanings and significances.

THE FOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVES: SOME EMERGING THEMES

I: The singers' social positioning

Important themes emerge from the personal narratives of the four featured singers. The foundations of the seemingly hierarchically fixed late-Victorian society in which Jack Beeforth was born had begun to be loosened half a century before. In 1844 none other than Benjamin Disraeli would write in his novel, *Coningsby*:

The other day we had a meeting in this neighbourhood to vote an agricultural petition that was to comprise all classes...Of course I described it as a petition of the nobility, clergy, gentry, yeomanry and peasantry of the county of —: and, would you believe it they struck out *peasantry* as a word no longer used and inserted *labourers*.¹

It was not only the class nomenclature that had been changing. The arrangement and composition of the classes themselves were shifting. Disraeli, above, found no space for the 'middle' class although this vague entity was already emerging, as just below it there seemed to be forming yet another important grouping:

the 'artisans' or 'mechanics', the men of skill, expertise, independence and education, who saw no distinction between themselves and those of similar social standing who chose to become entrepreneurs, or to remain yeoman farmers or small shopkeepers; the body of men who overlapped the frontiers between working and middle classes.²

It was to this grouping that Jack Beeforth and, it is argued, the other three men featured in this study belonged, all of them showing in their own different ways a hybridity of social

¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby* [1844] (London: Dent, 1933), Book iii Chapter iii, 112.

² E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 70-1.

positioning which escapes simple ascription, nor should they be regarded as an entirely homogeneous group, economically, socially or culturally. Jack Beeforth had, after all, been at different times, tenant farmer, proto-capitalist as owner of a small farm, and carter. He had been employer and employee. Even as employers, the Beeforth family's interface with their hired workers at Wragby was not a simple master-servant, wage-labour relationship. One, and sometimes two, of these workers lived in the farmhouse, eating at the farm's board and sharing such facilities as there were with the family.³ Jack's racing and hunting activities, cultural practices which were an important part of local life, provided interplay between different social and class groups. Jack, and any competent rider, could go to one of these events, rub shoulders with other participants, take part, because that was what always happened, but it was just for the day, and no boundaries had been permanently crossed.

Joseph Taylor had, for the last years of his life, been variously described as 'bailiff on a big estate',⁴ 'under-steward',⁵ 'steward',⁶ and 'local agent on the estate',⁷ where he had formerly been 'estate woodman and carpenter'.⁸ Though apparently still employed as an estate bailiff when Grainger recorded him, Joseph was still ambivalently regarded by Grainger as 'a genuine peasant folksinger',⁹ this no doubt being a piece of revivalist wishful thinking. As bailiff, Joseph Taylor occupied an intermediary position between farm tenants and their landlord, perhaps arranging tenancies, checking that well-regulated practices of husbandry were maintained and ensuring that rents on the estate were paid on time. He had not been born into a class where he might have been expected to reach such an important position, nor was he experienced in running a farm, a background which would surely have

³ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Burniston, 9 May 2000.

⁴ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

⁵ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 55.

⁶ Ruairidh Greig, 'Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire; a biography of a singer', I. Russell and D. Atkinson (eds), *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 2004), 387.

⁷ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 55.

⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

⁹ Percy Grainger, Leaflet, *English Traditional Folk-Songs*.

been useful. His longevity in the job, however, strongly suggests that he had made a success in this role and his dealings with his social superiors appear to be relaxed:

the Joseph Taylor of 1905-8 staying with Grainger in London in his Chelsea flat and attending the first performance of Brigg Fair at the Queen's Hall ... It is hardly remarkable that Taylor became such a favourite of Grainger's. Here was a man who had been a member of that 'small section of the community' namely the peasantry, and had learned its songs and had then, by self education and skill, made himself acceptable in the drawing rooms of Edwardian middle class society.¹⁰

Joseph Taylor was, for Percy Grainger, 'sturdy and robust, yet the soul of sweetness, gentleness, courteousness and geniality'.¹¹ The position of bailiff was no sinecure even for Taylor as an old man, for the injuries he sustained during a horse-and-trap round trip of 20 miles on the estate – perhaps a last management commission – exacerbated by his last artisan's task of 'fetching some cows from a field', proved fatal and Joseph died in harness aged 78.

The carpentry trade which Walter Pardon's parents put him to had ensured that he would avoid the increasing demands and waning rewards of farm labouring work (the traditional job for the Pardon family) in the disputatious milieu of the 1920s. Reflecting on the family history, Walter 'told of his great-grandfather who was sacked by a farmer, he thought for answering back which meant instant dismissal in those days, and so was blacklisted locally and forced to go to sea and his family into the workhouse'.¹² In 1906 a Norfolk man, George Edwards, founded the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union,¹³ and Walter was very proud of the family's association with the early Agricultural Union movement: 'his father had the second Union card issued, No.1 going to a man from

¹⁰ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 68.

¹¹ Percy Grainger, "Lincolnshire Posy", 2.

¹² Pat Mackenzie and Jim Carroll, *Walter Pardon Lecture Notes 1997*, 2.

¹³ Mike Yates, 'Stand Up Ye Men of Labour', *Musical Traditions* 1 (1983), 24.

Gimtingham, a nearby village. 40 years later, both men were awarded silver medals for their services to the Union'.¹⁴

The choice of carpentry as an occupation had seemed ill-judged for much of the early part of Walter Pardon's career during times of high general unemployment in the area, when the demand for his artisanal skills declined as activity in the rural economy shrank. Responding to these same economic forces two hundred kilometres up the east coast, Jack Beeforth was forced, temporarily, to sever his partnership with his father at Wragby to take a job as a carter carrying stone for use on the north Yorkshire highway. Walter's self-employed status had taken him away from the routines of wage-labour and given him a measure of control and flexibility in dealing with what, for him, were customers not masters, where work was negotiated, not imposed (though these distinctions would sometimes have been more psychological than economic when no work was to be had). Nevertheless his relative freedom to drive his own trade and conduct his own single life may have contributed to the development of Walter's mature identity, his serenity, quiet confidence and self-sufficiency.

Frank Hinchliffe lived in the Sheffield area all his life, his family 'farmed the land in the same locality for many generations',¹⁵ though, in his account of Frank's life and his singing, Ian Russell tells us that 'Frank's father worked for the corporation as a carter [*vide* Jack Beeforth] but a few years after his return from the First World War, the family moved into a small farm at Clough Fields'.¹⁶ Frank's career in running his own farm was relatively short for he was forced out of dairying by the time he was 37 and out of farming altogether at 45 years of age. Russell gives two accounts as to why this came about. The first account discloses that 'by vocation, Frank has always been a farmer, and if it had not been for certain financial pressures, he would undoubtedly be still working his farm at Clough Fields'.¹⁷ The

¹⁴ Pat Mackenzie and Jim Carroll, *Walter Pardon Lecture Notes 1997*, 4.

¹⁵ Ruairidh & Alvina Greig, *In Sheffield Park* (London: Topic Records 12TS308, 1977), liner notes.

¹⁶ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 71.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

second account explains that it was ‘rheumatoid arthritis, a crippling disease that forced him to give up his farm’.¹⁸ Frank was, however, still active enough to be able to secure an outdoor labouring job with the Water Authority (‘drystone walling, cleaning, mowing, planting’),¹⁹ until 1982 when ‘he took early retirement as a result of rheumatoid arthritis’.²⁰

The reasons for the early failure of Frank Hinchliffe’s farming business may be uncertain but he clearly regarded himself as a farmer throughout his life; he was a countryman and by nature retrospective.²¹ That many of his remembrances and anecdotes go back to his Clough Fields farming days is not surprising; most of Jack Beeforth’s shared memories were of life at Wragby, his earlier, bigger farm. The contradictions emerging from his self-perceptions and his journey out of the purely labouring population and back again in two generations aligns Frank Hinchliffe’s social positioning beside the other three singers we are considering here. Jack Beeforth, Joseph Taylor, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe are seen from their different histories as being in a class whose economic well-being was bound closely to the state of the agrarian domain within which they lived and worked, only Joseph Taylor remaining in waged employment throughout his working life.

Joseph Taylor’s last job appears as a favoured appointment in a permanent and hierarchical structure; he had incidental benefits from his being bailiff; he had use of an estate vehicle; estate produce was available to him; the house he lived in (the cottage on the north side of the Hall driveway)²² belonged to the estate; his job was assured as long as he performed his duties well. Joseph may, however, have found his position as tenuous as any one of the others if his service failed. Joseph’s later years embraced those in which a national Liberal administration was planning to introduce a programme of innovative social policy. It would be illuminating to know Taylor’s views on the old-age pension (introduced in 1908)

¹⁸ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1 (1995), 124.

¹⁹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 84.

²⁰ Ian Russell, ‘Stability and Change in a Sheffield Singing Tradition’, *FMJ* 5:3 (1987), 320.

²¹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 69.

²² Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 55.

and health and employment insurance (introduced in 1911), equivocally positioned as he long had been between the estate workers, who would be among the main beneficiaries, and the owners of the estate who would expect their taxes to be the main source of funding.

II: The singers' attitude to performance, ownership and entitlement

Jack Beeforth loved to sing and he did not have to be coaxed into starting up a song. No immediate human audience was needed, for he often sang at the plough. For him it had been like this as far back as he could remember.²³ He had, he said, never been nervous about singing in front of an audience,²⁴ and his assurance in his singing allowed him to claim, 'I could sing a man in a thousand'.²⁵ Jack, however, was not a braggart, his confidence stemming from a character which drove him to compete, and this he did across a wide range of activities: horse-racing, hunting, quoits, foot-racing, ploughing matches, hedging matches, singing competitions and pub dominoes.

Away from singing competitions, the challenge of performing songs without instrumental accompaniment and microphone in front of a group of people of variable attentiveness is often daunting. Informal sing-songs can often be slow to develop. Jack Beeforth was the sort of man to get things going and this was especially so after a day's hunting when the assembly of likeminded 'sportsmen' of the Fylingdale Hunt gathered at the Saltersgate Inn. The Beeforth performance of the 'Fylingdale Fox-hunt' in this setting shows a neat convergence of singer, song and context in which the song's value within this small group's cultural tradition is displayed by its role at this unique event. The singer is a local yeoman farmer who has ridden this terrain many times before; the song celebrates the actual hunt which has just ended and features the location of the very inn in which they are now all reliving the

²³ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 20 June 1974.

perils and triumphs of the chase. Its performance here is both spontaneous, since no formal arrangements to sing will have been made, and greatly premeditated, for no Fylingdale Hunt would have been complete without the singing of its own song. Of the people claiming a right to sing this song, one is left to conclude, surely among them must have been Jack Beeforth.

Frank Kidson referred to 'country ditties' as being 'in general the exclusive copyright of old fogies' who gathered in 'kitchens of quiet publichouses [sic]'.²⁶ Jack Beeforth did not, however, claim prime entitlement to sing all his songs. As has been shown in Chapter 3, a deference in Jack's attitude was evident when he spoke of certain songs, a guilty disclaimer as though the usual singer of the particular item, perhaps dead these many years, may have been listening; Jack might have been pretending to know only a fragment of 'The White Cockade', when he stopped and remarked, 'I've forgotten it all. Joss Cockerill used to sing that. Joss Cockerill down Harwood Dale'.²⁷ A similar interruption occurred during 'The Scarlet and the Blue', when John Morley of Ramsdale Farm Fylingthorpe was put forward as the man who 'used to sing it', Jack complaining 'my memory's going fast'.²⁸ The song 'Creeping Jane', written, Jack thought, about his beloved racehorse was always sung by 'McNeil of Littlebeck'.²⁹ The claim of entitlement to sing most of his songs, however, came from a belief that they had been in some ways given to him from his family and friends, that he had shown himself worthy of singing them and thus the songs had gradually become 'his'.

Where Joseph Taylor's attitude towards his songs, his sense of ownership and entitlement to sing them lay, is less clear. Percy Grainger had noticed that Taylor's memory for words

²⁶ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 71.

²⁷ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 6 July 1974.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 20 June 1974.

was not 'uncommonly good'.³⁰ Some of Joseph's fellow competitors at the Brigg Folk Singing Competitions were less charitable:

Several of them are said to have been quite resentful about the publicity which Taylor received because of the ultimate fame of his 'Brigg Fair' melody and the gramophone records which he later made. Some of this criticism may have been founded on the fact that Taylor could not remember the words of many verses of his songs whereas Gouldthorpe and Leaning could, but had not such acceptable voices. Judging from the phonograph cylinders it would seem that Taylor's chief assets were his voice and his style of singing which seemed to record well, whereas the other two, although their songs are of amazing quality, their voices are perhaps not.³¹

For listeners it can be deeply annoying and unsatisfying when a performer, however good, cannot finish a musical piece. Taylor's harsh critics who were fellow singers in the pub-singing domain where they habitually performed, were the ones who, over time, would have conferred entitlement for Joseph to sing this song or that during the give and take of singing sessions; if he wanted to take part in this exchange he would have had to learn the songs. Taylor, it is believed, did not sing in pubs; this route to group negotiation and recognition of certain individual proprietorial rights to a song was closed to him. Moreover, it is not known from which other sources most of his songs had been drawn, or where this Parish Clerk, church chorister and bailiff would have opportunity to sing them. Only perhaps in his daily round was Joseph able to go over his old songs, remembering them 'for personal pleasure or solace ... in isolation ... not imping[ing] on other[s]'.³² He would have had time enough on his own, working around the large estate he was charged with managing, to call back songs he once sang. Such a man, Michael Pickering imagines, may fashion now and then a spontaneous singing occasion, an ad hoc performance:

Walking alone through the fields to or from work ... driving a farm wagon on deliveries round the parish ... assuming no audience and perhaps [the performance] consisting of only part of a song (a 'snatch') or a whole song but *sotto voce*, or again, only whistled or hummed (the words and their

³⁰ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

³¹ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 65.

³² Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture*, 22.

significance maybe only existing in the mind but having, at the moment of delivery, no public existence as a musical entity).³³

The meetings with, and subsequent recordings for, Percy Grainger cast Joseph Taylor's singing in an approving and complimentary light; the interest and attention from one of the leading musicians of the day and his aristocratic friends seems to have been sufficient motivation for Joseph to recover for them fragments of their sought-for peasant heirlooms, torn though they were from their social and cultural contexts. In this Joseph is set apart from the other three singers by over six decades, and the shifts from the 'trophy hunting' practice which characterised the first Folk Song Revival, to the more contextualised approach of the second Revival.

Walter Pardon, like Joseph Taylor, was not a pub singer but he had learned most of his songs from his Uncle Billy Gee who had regularly sung in the Mitre Tavern, in nearby North Walsham.³⁴ At home, where songs were sung, Walter served a long and often silent apprenticeship, listening to the older family members singing their 'own' songs, their 'perk'. They all knew the words and the tunes but everybody was very protective of their own songs and did not want others to learn them.³⁵

The idea of song ownership does not lie comfortably beside the concept of tradition, where lore, legend, stories and anecdotes, songs and other cultural artefacts are supposed to pass seamlessly from one generation to the next; however, as time passes a singer may decide that the moment is right to take and incorporate some or all of the material previously denied. For Walter Pardon, this was in 1952 when his mother died and after which there was no singing around the table at Christmas. He was 38. From then on, he reprised all the songs he had ever heard and could remember, and he kept the tunes alive by playing them on the melodeon. The songs had become 'his' not through annexation but by inheritance – all the

³³ Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture*, 22.

³⁴ Karl Dallas, *Folk News* 11:3 (1977), 14-15.

³⁵ Pat Mackenzie and Jim Carroll, *Walter Pardon Lecture Notes 1997*, 3.

rest of the family who used to sing them were now gone. During the twenty years between the last family gathering and his 'discovery' by folk revivalists in the early 1970s, Walter had preserved and perhaps shaped the songs, some of which at the end of that time emerged as unique variants of those already widely known. Some have asked: 'Have they [the tunes] been "Walterised"? Were certain phrases easier to play on the melodeon? Or was it simply his own creativity? That he preferred certain musical phrases to others? We'll never know of course, but certainly Walter's tunes are that bit different and very recognisable'.³⁶ Having served his listening apprenticeship and crafted his material during a long and solitary adulthood, Walter Pardon might have been expected to echo the attitudes of his family before him in a possessiveness about his songs, but 'they're not my songs', he was provoked into saying, 'they belong to everybody'.³⁷

Frank Hinchliffe and his singing acquaintanceships had seemed to have had a solemn belief in the rectitude of the idea of song ownership, and Frank would rarely perform some of the songs he knew outside his family 'until the singers from whom he had learnt the songs were either dead or too old to lay any claims'.³⁸ That is not to say that total exclusivity was always practised, for it was important that a cross-section of people had a chance to sing but only, in this case, at the group's request:

Old Andrew Gregory, he used to sing 'Thresherman'. Course they used to tell him 'Come on Andy. Come on Andy, come on, lets have "Thresherman!"'. Course he'd sing it for us, d'you see. It weren't cos we didn't know it, if it comes to that like, but we used to let t'owd lad have a go at it.³⁹

While the aged were to be encouraged, the young emerging singers in West Sheffield were to be given their opportunity and here there is a poignant symbolism, the torch of tradition seemingly being handed over in this passage from Ian Russell's study:

³⁶ Pat Mackenzie and Jim Carroll, *Walter Pardon Lecture Notes 1997*, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁸ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 72.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Last time owd Riley sang that [Kitty Wells] he were getting into t'last verse an owd lad he couldn't go on. He said 'Finish it, Frank'. The song had already been learned, in fact the episode for Frank seems to mark his emergence as a performer in his own right and the end of his 'apprenticeship'.⁴⁰

Frank's internalising of his sense of ownership of a song and his entitlement to perform it flowed in part, Russell suggests, from the processes by which he had learned the song and the degree of difficulty it had presented. The rewards of learning, for example, a more complex song demanding higher degrees of motivation and concentration would be a more profound sense of ownership, a firmer sense of entitlement to sing it and a more intense identification with the song. Frank was, Russell tells us, 'selective; he considers very carefully what he is going to sing, taking numerous factors into account such as the time of year, the company, and above all his frame of mind'.⁴¹

Only Jack Beeforth and Frank Hinchliffe of these four singers were used to performing in public houses. Where Jack Beeforth, never shy, had no hesitation in starting up one of his songs as soon as he was asked, Frank Hinchliffe preferred 'to take an unobtrusive role and remain inconspicuous',⁴² singing when called upon to do so only under pressure, and even then not necessarily singing what was requested. He sang 'largely for personal enjoyment ... often sidestep[ping] the opportunity to perform in public'.⁴³ In his nature he shared many characteristics with Walter Pardon, who was 'quietly spoken and rather shy',⁴⁴ but who had spent so many years of self-effacement, during the Christmas family gatherings and throughout the later years, that he was pleased now that people on a wider stage wanted to hear him. Whether at home, at Folk Festivals or on large concert stages in the presence of hundreds of people, Walter was a man:

who seemed to treat every situation in the same way, I never noticed any stage fright, but rather felt that Walter approached each performance as a job of

⁴⁰ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 73.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁴ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 4.

work; something to be carried out to the best of his ability. Calm he may have been, but there was also a deep passion lying just below the surface ... Walter loved the songs, and he loved to sing them no matter where.⁴⁵

Although Walter may have treated every situation in the same way, there was no uniformity about his approach to the selection of a song for an occasion, or the treatment of it for a particular audience: 'At family gatherings Walter soon discovered that certain songs were only suitable for certain types of occasions, and he learnt how singers would vary their songs in regard to different audiences. This is why he was able to sing so well, no matter where he found himself'.⁴⁶

Walter Pardon's performance would surely have impressed and may have delighted Percy Grainger. Whilst taking a swipe at concert singers, 'dull dogs that they are', Grainger gave some blanket praise for all his Lincolnshire folksingers who, he said, 'were lords in their own domain – were at once performers and creators for they bent all their songs to suit their personal artistic taste and personal vocal resources'.⁴⁷ Though Grainger wrote much about Taylor's style of singing, he gave us almost nothing of Joseph's attitude to his songs and his performance of them, for example: his regard for the songs themselves; the significance of the songs in his life; his motivations for performance; his readiness for, and his modification of, performance; his participative skills; his strategies for the selection of his songs. One thing remains of which we may be confident concerning Joseph Taylor's approach to performing: that, having the artistic perception and social awareness to give Percy Grainger what he wanted, he would have been as skilled as our other three singers in fitting his song to suit the place, the audience (particularly when his eagerness to please was directed 'upwards') and the occasion. 'He [Joseph Taylor] most intelligently realises just what sort of

⁴⁵ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Percy Grainger, "Lincolnshire Posy", 1.

songs collectors are after, distinguishes surprisingly between genuine traditional tunes and other ditties, and is, in every way, a marvel of helpfulness and kindness.’⁴⁸

III: The singers’ attitude to tradition, history and change

The four singers featured here have in common a history in which each had assembled for himself, and had held on to, a corpus of songs which had been acquired mostly from oral rather than literary sources and which had been learned from singers performing individually, acoustically and with no musical accompaniment. These four singers, in their turn, were performing these songs in the same acoustic unaccompanied fashion until the end of their lives. Three of them, however – Joseph Taylor, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe – were taken up by one of the two Folk Song Revivals where technology intervened in some of their performances. The tenacity of these songs, and the mode of performance over at least two generations, may have suggested to each of these singers that he was part of a timeless village tradition, redolent with country lore and legend ‘handed down from Adam ... unchanging through the turbulence of the ever-rolling years’.⁴⁹ There had been a discernment held by many, perhaps most, singers in this genre that the bulk of the material they used had a tradition, a history and that it often bore important meanings and truths. Moreover, the material often carried an abundance of interesting information and interpretation about the past. It would be surprising, then, if these singers did not become sensitised to tradition and history in cultural arenas other than song. Industrialisation, population movements from countryside to town, technological development and globalisation swept away many of the foundations upon which the lives of these four country singers were built (here Joseph Taylor, who died in 1910, was affected least); the contradictions exposed when change confronted tradition deeply affected them all.

⁴⁸ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 164.

⁴⁹ Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture*, 19.

The patterns of influence cutting across Jack Beeforth's cultural landscape have been discussed earlier and there it was seen that his seemingly remote domain was in many ways well integrated into a wider cultural universe. Fylingdales and its environs had long experienced the economic and cultural changes brought about by Whitby's growth as a major national port, its importance in whaling, the development of the jet industry, the rise of tourism and the coming of the railways.

Upheavals have emanated from the structural changes more recently undergone, for example: the impact of the motor car on tourism; the transfer of farm buildings to non-farming activities; the increase in non-resident second-home ownership; the transfer of land ownership; central intervention in farming support. Jack was at the end able to reflect on the dwindling number of cultural institutions which had existed before he was born, were important to him during his life, and which were still there when his life was ending: the Staintondale Hunt; the Blackface Sheep Breeders Association (successor to the Goathland, Saltersgate and Levisham Association for prosecuting felons) and the Manor of Fyling Court Leet. The Whitby Hirings had gone about the time of the First World War and the Whitby to Scarborough railway line which was to have economically regenerated the locality when it was opened in 1885, was closed in 1965, its 80 year life span rather less than Jack Beeforth's own. 'They've takken all t'sleepers up',⁵⁰ Jack reminded himself. The exciting prospect, when Jack was a boy around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Ravenscar's being developed into a holiday resort, came to nothing. Seven hundred and fifty acres of land had been bought by the development company on which to build houses and shops not far from the edge of the cliffs, but by the time Jack Beeforth attained manhood only small traces of the plan were left, and the scheme 'remained a monument to yet another unfulfilled dream'.⁵¹ For Jack Beeforth there were few areas of continuity, predictability and

⁵⁰ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

⁵¹ K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, IV The North East*, 86-88.

apparent permanence remaining in his late years. Change had been unremitting throughout his life; his lasting affinity and partnership with the horse, however, meant that many of his skills and much of his knowledge had not become redundant. Those features of continuity which had survived, only served to heighten his regard for those elements which he considered to be 'traditional' and 'historical'; these were epitomised, for him, by the hunt.

Percy Grainger was Joseph Taylor's sole amanuensis and he tells us little about Joseph's attitude to tradition and history, to continuity and change outside the songs he sang for Grainger. Conjectural though any conclusions must be, aspects of the life Taylor fashioned for himself may give some clues. The song Joseph is most famous for, 'Brigg Fair', he learned (Grainger said) from gypsies in Binbrook; it was at Brigg itself, where the river Anchholme passes near the town, that gypsies had customarily run and paraded their horses at the annual horse fair. 'Brigg Fair was, and is, a great occasion in the gypsy calendar'.⁵² The site has, apparently, long been used for such gatherings and sport: 'Brigg ... earlier *Glanford Brigg* 1235 "Bridge at the ford where people assemble for revelry or games", OE *glēam* + *ford* + *brycg*.'⁵³ Joseph Taylor certainly knew the traditions of this annual event and its popularity even among non-gypsies, and we know that he attended it:

Saturday the 4th of August [1906] saw six of the most prolific singers [Joseph Taylor was one of them] assembled at Brigg to phonograph between them something in the region of thirty eight songs. One might ask how this amazingly energetic young man [Percy Grainger] managed to persuade six crusty old men to come and spend the day in Brigg. The answer, oddly enough is found in the first line of the most widely known song of Grainger's collection: 'Brigg Fair', which opens 'It was on the fifth of August'. In 1906 however the 5th fell on a Sunday and so the horse fair was held on Saturday the 4th. Grainger's old singers were no doubt lured there by the thought of a day watching the crowds of gypsies and horse dealers who even today fill the town on that day, running horses up and down to show them off and filling the streets of sleepy Brigg for one day in the year.⁵⁴

⁵² Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 68.

⁵³ A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 51.

⁵⁴ Robert W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 22.

The happy coincidence here of singer, song and actual event gives an immediacy to this song sung for Percy Grainger; here echoes are heard of Jack Beeforth's singing of the 'Fylingdale Fox-hunt' at the end of the chase, discussed earlier. However, for Joseph Taylor, vigorous though he was at 73, in verse 1 ('For love I was inclined'), would surely not have carried his confident expectation or even his faint hope of love, but perhaps only some retrospective sentiment of love gone by.

Many elements of Joseph Taylor's life were circumscribed by the protocols and formalities of historic institutions – the Hall for whom he worked as bailiff; the church of which he was a member and in which he was a chorister; the parish council, which, employing him in a part-time administrative capacity as Parish Clerk, paid him an annual stipend of £10. Taylor's connections with these institutions had served him well, and it would be expected that his attitudes to established and continuing structures would be benevolent and conservative. His brief contacts with the aristocratic Elwes family and with Percy Grainger and his artistic friends would have done little to undermine his preference for established social arrangements and their apparent durability, for the people in them had treated him well, helped in his advancement and, for a brief moment, made him famous.

It is clear that Walter Pardon had strong affection for some of the continuities, the traditions and the historical references he perceived in his life. Walter's pride in his family's connection with the trade union movement, however, shows that his attitude was not reactionary, antiquarian or unduly nostalgic. As a carpenter Walter was uncommonly aware of local examples of artistic creativity in wood, his own medium:

Walter began to tell me of the carvings in Knapton Church which, according to local tradition, had been salvaged from a ship that had sunk close to a nearby beach ... [he] took a delight in seeing a continuity between the church carvings – and the magnificent double hammer-beam roof for that matter – and his own working experiences.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 8.

Many have been impressed by Knapton's village church's woodwork: 'it's got the finest roof in the county with about 140 huge angels in, with their wings outspread all holding something in their hands'.⁵⁶ This church is interesting enough to feature in some guide books: 'Knapton – Population 307. 18 miles [from Norwich] ... The glories of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul are the 1504 double hammerbeam roof bearing 138 angels, each one different'.⁵⁷ Local tradition had it that some of the angels' faces had been tarred. 'Cromwell's soldiers done it', said Walter. Walter Pardon underwent his apprenticeship as carpenter in the neighbouring village of Paston, the site of Towey's Barn, built in 1581, a connection with which he laid claim through his trade. The barn's structure carried for Walter further links with artisans in wood of four centuries earlier, although non-carpenters may have found it, he thought, of limited appeal: 'there's a famous old barn here too, a tithe barn – 1581. There's not much to see at Towey's Barn – you ought to look in the church roof here, that's better than looking in Towey's Barn'.⁵⁸

Some of Walter's songs had reached Knapton on broadsheets from which his grandfather, born in the reign of George IV, had learned them,⁵⁹ but to Walter's disappointment none of this ephemera survived the clearout which followed his grandfather's death. Walter's sense of his small part in an enduring historical process, especially when he saw it to be illuminated by his own carpentry trade, may be one of the reasons for his clinging to his songs, many likewise replete with history. It is ironic that Walter, who did not marry, never became the patriarch of a family within which his histories could be passed on.

Some contemporaries of Frank Hinchliffe regarded him as 'a real old-timer' who loved the old way of life and farming in West Sheffield.⁶⁰ Living among people who shared his love and respect for the past, Frank expressed his feelings mainly through his songs, and the

⁵⁶ Peter Bellamy, *Folk Review* 3:10 (1974), 10-15.

⁵⁷ Michelin, *Green Guide to Great Britain* (Watford: Michelin, 1997), 228.

⁵⁸ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 86.

older they seemed the more highly he prized them.⁶¹ Ian Russell divides the songs into two groups: most of the Hinchliffe love songs originated from broadsides and the pleasure gardens, and were probably printed between 1750 and 1850; the songs about death mostly emerged from Victorian drawing room material and the music halls.⁶² Mirroring his love of the old ways, these songs and their provenance would have suited Frank well. Although he was not a regular churchgoer, Frank knew over 40 local carols.⁶³ These were from ‘a vigorous local tradition ... [which] predates the popular Victorian conception of carols by well over a century, with its origins in the sacred music and psalmody of eighteenth-century English country churches.’⁶⁴ Around Frank’s district and over the Sheffield area in general, these carols were (and are) most commonly sung in pubs, the singing season starting in some places as early as mid-November and going on perhaps until New Year’s Day. The sense of tradition borne by these annual rituals appealed to Frank and his love of the old way of life, and for the ‘received wisdom (oral history by another name) ... that caused him to value what others deemed to be out-of-step or old fashioned and to keep good faith with such judgements’.⁶⁵

No indication of Frank’s sense of tradition spilled over from his songs and carols to heighten his awareness of, and interest in, the continuities and disjunctions in other cultural forms. Ian Russell does, however, seek to build such a connection for the communities of West Sheffield as a whole, which he saw as having been under the threat of an encroaching suburbia, and which had sought to ‘reaffirm their identity through such aspects as their singing tradition and rural crafts, for example carol singing, drystone walling and horesedrawn ploughing’,⁶⁶ and since Frank Hinchliffe appeared to be well-integrated into the

⁶¹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 69.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶³ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1, (1995), 123.

⁶⁴ Ian Russell (ed.), *English Village Carols* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution SFWCD40476 1999), booklet.

⁶⁵ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1, (1995), 123.

⁶⁶ Ian Russell, ‘Stability and Change in a Sheffield Singing Tradition’, 320.

local community, we may perhaps infer that these sentiments were reflected in his own. For Frank, change during his life had frequently meant loss: the loss of Clough Fields farm (it was later converted into a riding stable); the loss of singing at his regular pubs through police intervention following complaints about noise; the loss of the pubs themselves as singing venues after 'open-plan' development; the loss of dexterity because of rheumatoid arthritis.

Frank was not implicated in a rich matrix of institutions as was Joseph Taylor (the Hall, the Church, the Parish), or Jack Beeforth (the Blackface Breeders Association, the Staintondale Hunt, the Manor of Fyling Court Leet, the horseracing, the wide range of competitions). For Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe, their reserved and quiet natures made them more comfortable in a familiar place where they knew the people and for Walter Pardon that did not include the pub: 'I like a room when its peace and quiet, that's what I like'.⁶⁷ Walter had, as we have seen, a keen appreciation of how historic forces had in their varying ways informed the tradition and culture of his locality: the early agricultural trade unionism, the Paston Papers, the Knapton church, Towey's Barn, the village's role in the early nineteenth century trade in contraband goods.

All four of these singers have displayed to a greater or lesser degree their perceptions of traditional and historical processes and context in much of their material; these insights have allowed them, even encouraged them, to find in other historic artefacts and processes around them themes of tradition and continuity. Their acknowledgement of having lived in times of great change is wistful, for during it most of the locales in which they customarily performed, where they briefly commanded attention, were closed off to them. In this Joseph Taylor is once more an exception, for it is unclear where or if he routinely sang his 'peasant songs' after his advancement. Unique too, for Joseph Taylor, is that amid the social, economic, technological and political turmoil that characterised even the first years of the twentieth century, he alone of the four was still working until his death, depending meanwhile on his

⁶⁷ Peter Bellamy, *Folk Review* (1974), 10.

own health and his employer's benevolence. However, the introduction of old-age pensions in 1908, had made Joseph an early beneficiary of state financial support, and it is likely that the tied cottage and some agreeable working arrangements were motivation enough for both parties to prolong the working relationship, until it finally ended with Joseph's death in 1910.

8

THE SONGS FOUR MEN SANG

I: Song collecting in the first Folk Song Revival

Knowledge of the four featured singers in this study emerged from the activities of enthusiasts engaged in what have later been styled as the first and second Folk Song Revivals: Joseph Taylor during the first and Jack Beeforth, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe during the second of these Revivals. The motivations and practices which have driven the process of folk song collecting during these two periods – at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in the decades immediately preceding and then following World War 2 – have received much attention both from those who were directly involved and from disinterested contemporary, and later, commentators. More than a hint in 1888 of *noblesse oblige*, and of altruism, is evident in Baring-Gould's response: 'I undertook the task', in reply to the plaintive plea of his Devonshire host: 'It is a sad thing that our folk-music should perish. I wish you would set to work and collect it – gather up the fragments that remain before all is lost'.¹ Frank Kidson told the readers of his *'Traditional Tunes: A Collection of Ballad Airs, Chiefly Obtained in Yorkshire and the South of Scotland'*:

The compiler's wish has been to at least temporarily rescue from oblivion some few of the old airs, which, passing from mouth to mouth for generations, are fast disappearing before the modern effusions of the music hall and concert room. He believes that many of the airs here noted down are excellent specimens of melody, and as such, are worthy of preservation; that they have a peculiar quaintness, a sweetness and a tenderness of expression, absent in the music of the present day of which it is impossible to successfully imitate.²

A little later, in July 1906, Percy Grainger wrote to his friend Karen Holten:

¹ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, vii.

² Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, v.

...this 'hunt' [for songs] is heavy work. The whole day and evening one is busy writing songs down, and after that one has to work for hours to get things in order and to write the many letters that go with the hunt. But the results are **just splendid**. Twice as many and as good as last year. I have got 8 songs of which I would give anything for in order to save them from getting lost, and forgotten ... It is really worth something, this hunt.³

Cecil Sharp himself, perhaps the most diligent and productive of all folk song collectors, had a fiercely single-minded approach to the mechanics of his collecting, as his assistant at the English Folk Dance Society wrote:

I took all the opportunities I could of getting Uncle Jonah, the voiceless shepherd in the smock, to talk of old times; but always with the fear of the Director [Sharp] very lively in me. For anecdote is nothing to him. His purpose in life is to fill blank bars with little magical dots; for this and this only does he scour the coloured counties. All conversation is therefore an interruption, if not a misdemeanour.⁴

The vanguard collectors of the first Folk Song Revival were, it would seem, not so much gripped by the detail of the complex social practices and contexts within which those who sang for them pursued their often humble lives, as they were by the songs. The Folk-Song Society had, it is true, offered to members some small advice on how to go about noting the detail surrounding song collecting activities. Committee member J. A. Fuller Maitland, at the second meeting of the Folk-Song Society on 22nd November 1899, in his report on songs received by the Society during the first year of its existence, explained: 'I may perhaps be allowed to point out that it is always worthwhile to give every detail as to the sources from which the contributions have come, exactly how they were heard, and from whom; this has not been done with [these] seven airs'.⁵

It was the mutual unease felt by both sides of the cultural interface that was the more problematic factor in the collecting of folk songs, as well-meaning, mostly upper-middle-class enthusiasts sought to prise the hidden musical jewels from singers who were mostly of the artisan, labouring and servant classes. Kate Lee, the Folk-Song Society's Honorary

³ Kay Dreyfus (ed.), *The Farthest North of Humanness*, 72.

⁴ E. V. Lucas, *London Lavender* (London: Methuen, 1912), 141. Quoted in Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 49.

⁵ J. A. Fuller Maitland, *JFSS* 1:2. (1900), 41.

Secretary, reported that she had begun her collecting ‘with much trepidation, but perhaps not so much as the singers (who positively shivered with fright), from whom I took down the tunes’.⁶ Moreover, before, during and after each collecting episode, substantial screening, prearranging and mediation seemed to be commonplace:

...a handful of song collectors had blazed the trail, publishing their findings in edited versions ... Recent evaluation of this work has proved how selective they were. It was a fivefold deception at least. Firstly they selected rural backwaters, secondly they selected the older inhabitants, thirdly they asked for old songs so they generally got what they wanted, fourthly they selected for publication what they considered to be the most interesting items. Finally, they edited, censored, bowdlerised, and generally tampered with what they did print. The early folk song collectors manipulated into fact an ideal repertoire which came to be taken as a yardstick.⁷

Manipulation was indeed practised by those in the first wave of folk song collecting. Sam Richards perceived that ‘many Romantics [were] scurrying for psychological shelter in ruralism, ancient mythology, “popular antiquities” ... golden ageism, sentimentalisation of children ... and folk songs’.⁸

Although its pedigree may be traced back to Johann Gottfried Herder and others in the eighteenth century, the first English Folk Song Revival may be regarded as a movement which sprang from the perception of a small band of music enthusiasts that urbanisation and industrialisation were sweeping away much of English rural culture; that, in the increasingly threatening international milieu, ‘all the things that marked the folk-music of the race also betoken the qualities of the race, and as a faithful reflection of ourselves we needs must cherish it’;⁹ that if not quickly gathered in, these cultural tokens would be lost forever.

The amassing of the thousands of songs that were collected at that time was conditioned by the social class, economic position and educational background of the participants, in what was most often a patronising/deferential relationship. However, Roy Palmer has pointed out that Ralph Vaughan Williams, and many of his fellow-collectors, for that matter, had a

⁶ Kate Lee, *JFSS* 1:1. (1899), 7.

⁷ Sam Richards, *Sonic Harvest: Towards Musical Democracy* (Charlbury: Amber Lane Press, 1992), 74.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹ Sir Hubert Parry, *JFSS* 1:1 (1899), 3.

deep respect and affection for their informants.¹⁰ Limited recording technology was available in the first Revival – the primitive Phonograph cylinder machine – and in any case it was not widely used. Most collectors had, therefore, to take down the words and tunes using pencil and notepaper. This lengthy process and the need to press the singer to repeat the song until it had been completely taken down, did not give the collector much time to note additional information about the piece, the singer or the setting. Many collectors would not think this information important, or were not interested in pursuing it, since they were chiefly concerned with the cultural artefacts themselves. Some simply would not have had the necessary social skills to interact with people from a lower social class.

In looking at the first Revival folk song collector Percy Grainger, and his ‘favourite singer’,¹¹ Joseph Taylor, it is clear that here we have an atypical relationship. In the first place, Grainger was Australian and by his upbringing, his nature and his life experiences was not easy to place in any firm English social category. Taylor had transcended his original social position and it is likely that there was an easy ambience when they met, which, for the purposes of noting songs, was on seven occasions between April 1905 and June 1908.¹² Also atypical were the last four sessions when the songs were recorded by the ‘Standard’ Edison-Bell Phonograph, in which technology Grainger was the pioneer in folk song collecting in England.

As to the songs taken down from Joseph Taylor’s singing, most would have been considered by Grainger and his fellow collectors as bearing the stamp of the ‘authentic’ folk song; whilst not being able to define this genre precisely, they would claim competence in recognising the real thing when they heard it. ‘You see,’ wrote Grainger, ‘the *folksong-singer* sticks to *tales*; he sings of plots; & as these tales are mostly of long ago the *spirit of today*

¹⁰ Roy Palmer, *Brushes and Briars*, xix.

¹¹ W. Mellers, *Percy Grainger*, 6.

¹² R. W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 25-32.

finds small room in that art, & instead of fresh everyday realistic introductions into folksong words, little except forgettings & corruptions have been its source of alteration'.¹³

Mediation in the selection of the appropriate songs to sing was not exercised by Grainger (he wrote), but by Joseph Taylor himself: 'He most intelligently realises just what sort of songs collectors are after, distinguishes surprisingly between genuine traditional tunes and other ditties ...'¹⁴ Joseph Taylor's recorded and noted corpus of thirty two songs must be considered to represent only part of his repertoire, and several important factors indicate why this should be so. His meetings with Grainger – his only contemporary annalist – were few and usually brief, allowing time for an average of only four songs to be noted at each of six visits (the one other meeting, the first where the Phonograph was used, garnered fifteen songs). Full advantage was not made of the existing recording technology for it was used with Joseph Taylor at just four of the seven meetings. The mediated and situated predisposition of Taylor's performances, when both artist and listener silently colluded in the choice of songs, in the imposing Manor House at Brigg where most of the singing took place, effectively excluded any songs which those present might have thought inappropriate. Grainger, though unlike many of his fellow folk song collectors of the first Revival, was not deeply interested in, and would have found little illumination from, the minutiae of the lives of his informants, where these did not conform to the Romantic stereotype. (Grainger wrote brief affectionate sketches of 'the characteristics of the three men who have sung both best, and most, to me'¹⁵ – Joseph Taylor, George Gouldthorpe, George Wray, all of North Lincolnshire).

As we shall see, Joseph Taylor's song list implicitly denies his knowledge and incorporation of songs whose origins were in the music hall, in public gardens or on parlour song-sheets, since it includes only items which the early collectors have styled 'folk songs'. Grainger had lent Joseph 'The Kidson book' (possibly *Traditional Tunes*) and later gave him

¹³ Kay Dreyfus, *The Farthest North of Humanness*, 105.

¹⁴ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 164.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164-5.

another song book and was apparently ‘not concerned about the possible influence of other collected versions on his informant’s repertoire’.¹⁶ The processes of mediation earlier described may have hidden a richer and more varied body of songs which Percy Grainger may have considered to be not relevant to his purpose; Joseph Taylor’s developing career and membership of the church choir may have limited his opportunities and desire to sing secular songs at all, and his recorded repertoire, noted when he was in his late seventies, may represent all he could remember of those he had heard or sung in days of long ago.

II: Song collecting in the second Folk Song Revival

Sixty years separate the time of Percy Grainger’s compilation of Joseph Taylor’s corpus in the first decade of the twentieth century, from the 1970s, when the songs of the three other profiled singers, Jack Beeforth, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe, were being recorded. During the intervening years, profound political, social, cultural and technological transformations had taken place in England when a second Folk Song Revival, apparently germinating before World War 2 and gaining momentum in the 1950s, seemed by the 1970s to be in full flower. A few people with an interest in the folk music genre and a curiosity about its possible survival (either as part of a lived culture or merely in people’s memory) began to cast around for likely informants; some enthusiasts received unsolicited information about vernacular singers in their locale, whilst others were able to find fragments of ‘the tradition’ within their own families.

Important differences between the first- and second-wave collectors are evident – in their motivations, the ideologies and philosophies they held, the processes they followed and the equipment at their disposal. The dynamics of the singer/collector relationship had come to reflect the more egalitarian structure of society. Enthusiasts collecting songs after World War 2 were concerned less with recording the last gleanings of a disappearing way of life, than

¹⁶ Ruairidh Greig, ‘Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire’, 389.

with finding how traditional forms like songs, dances and customs interacted with patterns of lived social experience. This was something other than trophy-hunting:

... without an attempt to establish the nature of the relationship of song to social context, what is said to constitute an essential part of our cultural heritage remains of no more value than the paper on which it is printed ... the mere printing of songs without reference to the contexts in which they were performed is an activity as laudable and valuable, historically, as the collection and display of Victorian *pince-nez* or Edwardian monocles.¹⁷

Moreover, confidence in the understanding of what exactly a folk song was had gradually been undermined, in spite of worthy attempts at definition, like the 1954 International Folk Music Council's widely known reformulation of Cecil Sharp's earlier continuity: variation: selection model. The second Revival collectors, if they were interested in the concept of 'folk song' at all, had still to rely on instinct and intuition to identify what was in truth an amorphous entity.

The concept of folk song embodied in the language does not exist in English before the last third of the nineteenth century and ... it is essentially a selective category. Its user takes little interest in the actual practice of his/her informants, merely wishing to take from them those items which correspond to the collector's preformed notion of what constitutes the genuine article. It is thus a profoundly ahistorical category, concerned more with aesthetic distinctions made by the collector than with the aesthetic choices made by the performer.¹⁸

By the 1970s, having developed a recognition that only through studying their social and cultural contexts could real meanings be found in traditional forms, scholarship in popular music now demanded a deeper study of a song's background details, rather than the more perfunctory and less informed approach of sixty years earlier. Politically-conscious artists such as Ewan MacColl and A. L. Lloyd, believing history to be inevitably prejudiced in favour of the educated and affluent classes and their documented versions of events, had begun to record the songs and experiences of the lower end of the social scale. MacColl's 'Radio Ballads', produced between 1957 and 1964, had made sound pictures of the lives of

¹⁷ Michael Pickering, *Village Song and Culture*, 1.

¹⁸ Vic Gammon, 'A. L. Lloyd and History: A Reconsideration of Aspects of "Folk Song in England" and some of his Other Writings', I. Russell (ed.), *Singer, Song and Scholar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 151.

disparate groups in society: 'Sam Lerner ... knew dozens of country songs, traditional ballads, mnemonic rhymes for navigation and local legends. We spent three weeks recording him and were left with thirty hours of magnificent actuality'.¹⁹

Even non-specialists, who perhaps sang a song or two at the local folk clubs, found that the more detail of their informants' lives the tape-recorders picked up at the 'collecting' sessions, the deeper their understanding of the genre and the more interest it yielded to themselves as amateur performers and to their audiences. It may have even brought them a little recognition in the small world of folk song. The more democratic milieu of the 1970s made for a more relaxed social relationship between those recorded and those recording, though this brought other problems of intensified mediation inherent in collectors' attempts to embed themselves deeper and deeper into the lives of their informants.

An important operational difference between the first and second Revivals is the frequency with which the collecting visits took place and the longevity of the associations, once made. The first wave seems to be characterised by a few visits, often only one, by the collector to the informant over a short time-span. Percy Grainger's return visits to his informants were unusual though not unique. The experiences of those later singers under review – Jack Beeforth, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe – show an interest by their chroniclers over a far longer period – a few months and six visits to Jack Beeforth until his death (and a still-continuing connection with his family), and countless visits over three decades in respect of the other two. Enduring associations, made easier by the improvements in travel and communications, had given opportunities to ensure that singers' repertoires were fully recorded and the contextual details fully explored. In the case of Jack Beeforth, we can only conjecture on the extent of his full repertoire, our information being based, as it is, on such a relatively short recording time, our first contact with him having been made only a few months before his death.

¹⁹ Ewan MacColl et al., *Singing the Fishing* (London: Topic Records TSCD803 1999), booklet.

The recording operation itself, even in the 1970s was becoming increasingly efficient and less obtrusive. It is easy to see from their repertoires, that the corpus of material recorded from most individual singers in the second Revival is distinguished from the first by its greater volume and its eclecticism. Vernacular singers from the 1970s did not seem to know, or care, what category their songs fell into, as Joseph Taylor apparently did, when singing to Percy Grainger in Edwardian England. Frank Hinchliffe's chronicler, Ian Russell, wrote that Hinchliffe's song list made him 'a prodigious singer by contemporary English standards'.²⁰ In comparing the volume of the repertoires of the four featured singers, it will be useful briefly to look at the extent of some other singers' repertoires noted in the first and second Folk Song Revivals. The intention here is not to construct a table where singers are graded according to the magnitude of their repertoires, but to give some idea of the range and sizes of some well-documented singers' repertoires other than those centrally featured in this study, and some of the issues raised in evaluating these.

Percy Grainger, as has been shown, considered Joseph Taylor to be 'in most respects the most exceptional singer I have yet heard',²¹ referring to Taylor's singing style and his comprehension of the folk song genre rather than to his song list, or indeed to his flawed ability to summon up all his songs at will. Grainger had noted that Taylor's repertoire consisted of 32 songs, not an unusually large number when set alongside some of Grainger's other Lincolnshire singers:²² George Wray (22 songs), George Gouldthorpe (11), Joseph Leaning (40) and Dean Robinson (8). If the Robinson total of eight looks sparse, it cannot be because of Grainger's lack of opportunity in eliciting any additional material, for the two met in April and September 1905, July and August 1906 and again in May 1908;²³ more likely it is the result of the winnowing in Grainger's mediation processes, where only what he considered to be folk songs would have been retained.

²⁰ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 69.

²¹ Percy Grainger, *Personal letter*, June 1925. EFDSS archives.

²² Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

²³ R. W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 10.

For the first Folk Song Revival collectors, one of their most generous informants, Henry Burstow of Horsham in Sussex (from whom they took around 70 songs), had recorded ‘at the back of his book, *Reminiscences of Horsham* ... a list of songs [420 titles] which he knew, an unmediated record – though alas, only of titles not texts’.²⁴ Whether Burstow ‘knew’ this great number of songs well enough to perform them is doubted by some reviewers: ‘... heretically, I sometimes wonder just how many songs he [Burstow] could, in fact, recall on the spot’,²⁵ although if instant and faultless recollection by singers were an important criterion in judging them, many repertoires might shrink at a stroke.

George Maynard (1872-1962) lived on the Sussex/Surrey border at Copthorne at a time which overlapped the first and second Folk Song Revivals, but he first became known outside his circle of acquaintanceships only in 1948, when his team won a marbles tournament and he was taken to a BBC studio to be interviewed. He came to be regarded as one of the greatest traditional singers of his generation. Some confusion in Ken Stubbs’ account of George Maynard’s song list is noted:

I recorded on tape the following 65 songs (some only in part) ... some of these George knew only in fragments. I wrote down all the words which he remembered of each. Although among these are songs of music-hall origin, I preserved the recordings of them as they are little-known and among the best of their kind, being on the way, possibly, to becoming folk songs. If all the songs known by George had been included in the list, the number in his repertoire would not have been far short of Henry Burstow’s [400+].²⁶

Stubbs’ inclusion of fragments and music-hall items suggest that no sifting has taken place here, yet he offers no evidence to support his claim that Maynard’s total ‘would not have been far short’ of Burstow’s, a leap from 65 to over 400 songs, so this idea has to be considered as fanciful. It must be remembered that many singers of this genre (as of others) are constantly adding to their repertoires which should not therefore be regarded as static and unchanging. As Ken Stubbs also noted:

²⁴ Vic Gammon, ‘“Not Appreciated in Worthing?” Class expression and popular song texts in mid-nineteenth-century Britain’, R. Middleton and D. Horn (eds), *Popular Music* 4, Performers and Audiences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 7.

²⁵ Ken Stubbs, *The Life and Songs of George Maynard* (London: EFDSS Journal repr. No. 12, 1963), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

Like other traditional singers, George acquired the popular songs of the day (whether folk or not). Jean Hopkins ... was a member of the East Grinstead Folksong Group. She sang a version of 'The False Bride' ... which she had learnt from the singing of an uncle ... George picked it up from her, and it was instructive to notice his modification of the melody. One was able to hear an authentic example of a folk song evolving in the handing down.²⁷

The singer and farm worker, Harry Cox (1885-1971), separated by a generation and fifteen kilometres of Norfolk countryside from Walter Pardon, had a known repertoire of 145 items; he was no 'old boy trying to recall long forgotten songs heard in his youth. Harry had set out to learn songs and kept them alive in his mind by constantly singing them.'²⁸ Cox, apparently, did not solely rely on his memory, for (not being a good writer) he had enlisted others – notably his sister – to write down the words he would sing to her, in school exercise books. This hoard contained an ever-expanding repertory, the earliest of the three books being dated 1905 and the other two 1913.²⁹ Quite how Harry Cox made use of this and other, printed, material of which he possessed a large collection – newspaper sheets of songs, broadsides, chapbooks, manuscript songs – is uncertain. Why would it be collected if it were never used? It is possible that Cox's mother or some other member of the family was the prime user of this resource, passing on to Harry what they read there, first teaching and later perhaps refreshing his memory. But Bob Thomson, a specialist in traditional song who knew Cox well, was adamant that Harry had learned nothing from his press cuttings, printed songsters or ballad sheets: 'not one single song',³⁰ with an eagerness that seems to impart a preference, for that commentator, for the oral over the written as sources for traditional singers.

²⁷ Ken Stubbs, *The Life and Songs of George Maynard*, 2.

²⁸ Bob Thomson, *Harry Cox: the bonny labouring boy*, (London: Topic Records TSCD512D, 2000), booklet, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰ Bob Thomson, *FMJ* 2:4 (1973), 320.

III: The repertoires compared

On the following pages, repertoires of the four featured singers in this study are consolidated in an alphabetically arranged matrix, in which each song is seen against the singer or singers from whom it was noted. The data has been unified and set out for the following purposes:

- 1 to examine how typical in the genre is the repertoire of Jack Beeforth, the central figure in this study
- 2 to examine the extent to which there is complete commonality of song between the four featured men – whether there is a ‘core repertoire’ among these singers
- 3 to study where there is some overlapping of songs between two or three of the singers
- 4 to provide a key reference for selecting appropriate songs to illustrate the singing of the four men

In the sections following the matrix, conclusions will be drawn from the data which it contains.

In the matrix the following coding is used:

x	: song substantially known by singer
incomp	: incomplete song or fragment
ref	: reference made to song by singer
wds only	: spoken piece with no tune given

Songs having alternative titles have been identified where possible, and they have been matched in the matrix.

Table 8.1: Songs /Singers Matrix (i)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
1	Alice Grey			x	
2	All Among the Barley			x	
3	All Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough	x		x	x
4	An Old Man's Advice			x	
5	As I Wandered by the Brookside			x	
6	Balacava			x	
7	(The) Banks of Allen Water			x	
8	(The) Banks of Loch Lomond			x	
9	(The) Banks of Sweet Dundee	x		x	incomp
10	(The) Banks of the Clyde				x
11	(The) Banks of the Nile			x	
12	Barbara Allen		x		incomp
13	(The) Batchelor		x		
14	Be Kind to your Parents	x			
15	(The) Bells were Ringing	x			
16	Ben Bolt			x	
17	(The) Birds upon the Tree		x		
18	Black-Eyed Susan			x	
19	(The) Blind Boy				x
20	Blow the Winds			x	
21	Bluebell			x	
22	Bluebell my Heart is Breaking	x			
23	(The) Bold Fisherman			x	
24	Bold Grenadier				x
25	Bold Nevison		x		
26	(The) Bold Princess Royal			x	
27	Bold William Taylor		x		
28	(The) Bonny Bunch of Roses			x	
29	(The) Bonny Labouring Boy	x			
30	Bonny Mary		x		
31	Bonny Young Scotch Lassie				x
32	Bound to Emigrate to New Zealand			x	
33	(A) Boy's Best Friend is his Mother	x			
34	Boy's of the Old Brigade			x	
35	Break the News to Mother			x	x
36	Bridal Song	x			
37	Brigg Fair		x		
38	Bright Golden Store			x	
39	Brisk Young Butcher	x			
40	(A) British Man-of-War			x	
41	(The) Broomfield Wager			x	
42	By the Side of the Zuider Zee			x	
43	Carolina Moon			x	
44	Caroline and her Young Sailor Bold			x	
45	(A) Certain Girl	wds only			
46	Cock-a-doodle-do			x	
47	Cold Stringy Pie	x			
48	Come Little Leaves			x	

Table 8.1: Songs / Singers Matrix (ii)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
49	Come to the Bower				incomp
50	(A) Country Life			x	
51	Creeping Jane	x	x		
52	(The) Cruel Mother		ref		
53	(The) Cruel Ship's Carpenter		x		
54	(The) Cuckoo			x	
55	(The) Cunning Cobbler			x	
56	Cupid the Ploughboy			x	
57	(The) Dandyman			x	
58	(The) Dark-Eyed Sailor	x		x	incomp
59	(The) Deserter			x	
60	(The) Devil and the Farmer's Wife			x	
61	Don't go Down the Mine Dad			x	incomp
62	Don't Send my Poor Boy to Prison				incomp
63	Down by the Dark Arches			x	
64	Down by the Old Abbey Ruins			incomp	
65	Edward				x
66	(The) Farmer's Boy	x		x	
67	(The) Farmer's Boy (parody)			x	
68	(The) Farmhouse on the Hill				x
69	(The) Female Cabin Boy			x	
70	(A) Few Jovial Sportsmen				x
71	(A) Fine Hunting Day (We'll all go a-Hunting)	x			x
72	For me, for me			x	
73	Forty Long Miles				x
74	Frank's Song (own composition)				incomp
75	(The) Fylingdale Fox-hunt (1811 – 1911)	x			
76	(The) Fylingdale Fox-hunt (1942)	x			
77	Galway Bay			x	
78	(The) Garden Gate				x
79	Geordie		x		
80	(The) German Clock-Winder	x			
81	(The) Gypsy Girl				incomp
82	(The) Gypsy's Warning				x
83	(The) Gypsy's Wedding		x		
84	Go and Leave Me	x		x	
85	(The) Golden Glove				x
86	(The) Golden Vanity				incomp
87	(The) Golden Wedding			x	
88	(The) Good Rhine Wine			x	
89	(The) Gooseberry Tree			x	
90	Good Luck to the Barleycorn	ref			
91	(The) Gown of Green		x		
92	Grace Darling			x	
93	Grandfather's Clock			x	
94	Grandmother's Chair				x
95	(The) Grass Grows Green	incomp			
96	Green Bushes		x	x	

Table 8.1: Songs / Singers Matrix (iii)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
97	(The) Green Mossy Banks of the Lee				x
98	(The) Harland Road			x	
99	(The) Hat my Father Wore	x			
100	Help One-Another Boys			x	
101	Here's to the Grog			x	
102	(The) Highwayman Outwitted				incomp
103	Hold the Fort			x	
104	(The) Hungry Army			x	
105	(The) Huntsman			x	
106	Husband Taming			x	
107	I Don't Care if there's a Girl there			x	
108	If Ever I get Drunk Again			x	
109	If I were a Blackbird			x	
110	If those Lips could only Speak			x	
111	I'll Beat the Drum Again (The Female Drummer)			x	
112	I'll Hang my Harp on a Willow Tree			x	
113	I'll Never Forget the Day that I was Born				incomp
114	I'll take you Home again Kathleen			x	
115	I'll Walk Beside You			x	
116	I'm a Man that's done Wrong to my Parents				x
117	I'm Saving them all for Mary			incomp	
118	In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree			x	
119	I Once was a Merry Ploughboy	incomp			
120	(The) Irish Emigrant				x
121	Irish Molly-O			x	
122	I Traced her Little Footsteps in the Snow			x	
123	I Tramp with my Gun in my Pocket				incomp
124	It's Hard to say Goodbye			x	
125	It was Early in the Spring	x			
126	I want to see the Old Home Again			x	
127	I Wish, I Wish			x	
128	I Wonder if you Miss me Sometimes			x	
129	Jack Hall			x	
130	Jack Tar Ashore			x	
131	Jackie Boy, Master (The Keeper)			x	
132	Jim the Carter's Lad				incomp
133	(The) Jolly Waggoner			x	x
134	Jones's Ale			x	
135	Just a Song at Twilight			x	
136	(A) Kiss and Nothing More				x
137	Kiss me in the Dark	x			
138	Kitty Wells				x
139	(The) Lads in Navy Blue			x	
140	Landlord and Tenant		x		
141	(The) Lark in the Morning				incomp
142	Last Valentine's Day	x			
143	(The) Lawyer			x	
144	(The) Letter Edged in Black				x

Table 8.1: Songs / Singers Matrix (iv)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
145	Let the Winds Blow High (The Irish Girl)			x	
146	Lincolnshire Poacher				incomp
147	Little Ball of Yarn			x	
148	Little Grey Home in the West			x	
149	Little Mary				incomp
150	Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane	x		x	
151	Little Shirt my Mother gave to me	x			
152	Long, Long Trail a-Winding			x	
153	Lord Bateman		x		
154	Lord Lovell			x	
155	Love at Home				x
156	(The) Maid of Australia			x	
157	(The) Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo			x	
158	(The) Marble Arch			x	
159	Maria Martin		x		
160	Mary on the Wild Moor				x
161	(The) Men of Merry England			x	
162	(The) Mermaid		x		
163	(The) Miller and his Sons			x	
164	(The) Miner's Dream of Home			x	
165	(The) Minstrel Boy			x	
166	(The) Mistletoe Bough	ref		x	
167	(The) Model Church				x
168	Mother Machree			x	x
169	My Love he is a Sailor Boy	x			
170	My Wild Irish Rose			x	
171	Nancy Lee			x	
172	Naughty Jemima Brown			x	
173	(The) Nobleman and the Thresherman				x
174	Not for Joe, Not for Joseph			x	
175	Nothing Else to do				x
176	Nowt to do wi' me	x			
177	Off to Philadelphia			x	
178	(The) Old Armchair			x	
179	Old Brown's Daughter			x	
180	Old Joe the Boat is going Over			x	
181	Old King Cole			x	
182	(The) Old Miser			x	
183	Old Parson Brown			x	
184	Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill			x	x
185	Old Virginia				x
186	(The) Old Wooden Rocker				x
187	Once I Courted a Damsel		x		
188	One Cold Morning in December			x	
189	Only a Beautiful Picture			x	
190	(The) Oughtibridge Trail Hunt				incomp
191	(The) Outlandish Knight		ref		
192	Over the Garden Wall				incomp

Table 8.1: Songs /Singers Matrix (v)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
193	(The) Oyster Girl	x			
194	(The) Parson and the Clerk			x	
195	(The) Pear Tree				x
196	Peggy Bawn			x	
197	Peggy O'Neil			x	
198	(A) Picture no Artist can Paint			x	
199	(The) Poacher's Fate			x	
200	Polly Vaughan			x	
201	Poor Old Man of 60	incomp			
202	Poor Roger is Dead			x	
203	Poor Smuggler's Boy			x	
204	Pratty Flowers				x
205	(The) Pretty Ploughboy			x	
206	Put a Bit of Powder on it Father			x	
207	(W)raggle-taggle Gypsies			x	incomp
208	Rakish Young Fellow			x	
209	(The) Rambling Blade			x	
210	Ring the Bell Watchman			x	
211	Ring Ring the Bell			x	
212	Robin Adair			x	
213	Roman Soldiers			x	
214	(The) Rose of Tralee	ref			
215	Rosin-a-Beau			x	
216	Rufford Park Poachers		x		
217	Salisbury Plain		ref		
218	(The) Saucy Sailor	ref		x	
219	Sedgefield Fair	x			
220	Seventeen on Sunday			x	
221	Sheffield Park				x
222	Shepherd of the Hills			x	
223	She Stood in a Working Man's Dwelling			x	
224	(The) Ship that Never Returned			x	x
225	(A) Ship to Old England Came			x	
226	Sitting on the Stile, Mary			x	
227	Six Sweethearts	x			
228	Skipper and his Boy			x	
229	Slave-driving Farmers			x	
230	Smiling Through			x	
231	Sons of Labour			x	
232	Spanish Ladies			x	
233	Spencer the Rover				incomp
234	(The) Spotted Cow		x		x
235	(The) Sprig of Thyme		x		
236	(The) Steam Arm			x	
237	Stow Brow	x			
238	Sweet Evalina	x			
239	Sweetheart May			x	
240	Sweet Marie			x	

Table 8.1: Songs / Singers Matrix (vi)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
241	(The) Tailor's Britches	x			
242	Teddy O'Neil			x	
243	There is an Alehouse		x		
244	There is Somebody Waiting for me			x	
245	There's a Light in the Window			x	
246	There's no Place Like the Old Home			x	
247	(The) Three Ravens		ref		
248	They Dare not do it Now	x			
249	(The) 39 - 45 Star			x	
250	Thornaby Woods			x	
251	Tommy Make Room for your Uncle			x	
252	(The) Topman and the After Guard			x	
253	(The) Trees they do Grow High			x	
254	Two Jolly Butchers			x	
255	Two Little Girls in Blue			x	x
256	Two Lovely Black Eyes			x	
257	Up the Chimney Pot			x	
258	Up to the Rigs (of London Town)			x	
259	Van Dieman's Land			x	
260	(The) Village Blacksmith				incomp
261	Wake up Johnny			incomp	
262	(The) Wanderer			x	
263	Wassail Song				x
264	(The) Weaver's Daughter				x
265	(A) Week's Matrimony	x			
266	Welcome as the Flowers in May	incomp			
267	We'll all go the Same Way Home			x	
268	Wheel your Perambulator			x	
269	When a Youngster at Home				x
270	When I was Young		x		
271	When I Wore a Tunic			x	
272	When the Cock Begins to Crow			incomp	
273	When the Fields are White with Daisies			x	
274	When the Great Red Dawn is Shining			x	
275	When the Poppies Bloom again			x	
276	When they Ask me what your Name is			x	
277	When you and I were Young, Maggie				x
278	When you get up in the Morning			x	
279	When you Wore a Tulip			x	
280	Where are you Going		x		
281	Where the Bluebells Grow	x			
282	Where there's a Will there's a Way				x
283	While Forging of my Scales and Springs				x
284	While Shepherds Watched			x	
285	While Sitting by the Side of a Fond and Loving..				x
286	(The) White Cockade	ref			incomp
287	(The) White Hare		x		
288	White Wings				x

Table 8.1: Songs / Singers Matrix (vii)

No	Song Title	Singer			
		Jack Beeforth	Joseph Taylor	Walter Pardon	Frank Hinchliffe
289	Why Don't you Marry the Girl				incomp
290	(The) Wild Colonial Boy				x
291	(The) Wild Rover	x			x
292	William and Dinah				x
293	Willie went to Westerdale	x			
294	Will you Love me in December			x	
295	Will you Love me when I'm Old	x			
296	Won't you come to me in Canada			x	
297	Woodman Spare that Tree			x	
298	Worcester City		x		
299	(The) Wreck of the Lifeboat			x	
300	(The) Wreck of the Northfleet				incomp
301	(The) Wreck of the Ramillies			x	
302	Write me a Letter from Home			x	
303	(The) Yarborough Hunt		x		
304	Yellow Rose of Texas			x	
305	Yorkshire Though in London			x	
306	You Generals All			x	
307	Young Henry the Poacher				x
308	Young Sailor Cut Down (Royal Albert)	x			x
309	Young William the Ploughboy		x		
310	Your Faithful Sailor Boy (Farewell my own....)	x		x	

Sources of matrix data

Jack Beeforth 48 songs from tape recordings and notes: David Hillery 1973 onwards.
2 songs from *Songs of the Ridings*, notes: M. & N. Hudlestone 2001.

Joseph Taylor All songs from *Unto Brigg Fair*, notes: Bob Thompson 1972.

Walter Pardon All songs from *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, booklet: Mike Yates 2000.

Frank Hinchliffe All songs from *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*: Ian Russell 1977.

IV: Songs in common between the singers

It may have been expected that the rurally situated lives of all of the featured singers, and their class positioning as something other than purely waged artisans, would have in some ways conditioned their choices of songs to learn and sing, and given some homogeneity to their repertoires; indeed some correspondence between the different repertoires is revealed in the matrix. For specific songs, however, the singers' repertoires show that few songs were known by more than one of these singers. In the combined repertoires totalling 310 songs, only 22 songs were known to two or more singers and only 3 songs were crossovers known by three of them. Not one song was shared by all four singers.

Table 8.2: Crossover songs from Jack Beeforth to the others

no	song title	JB	JT	WP	FH
3	All Jolly Fellows	x		x	x
9	(The) Banks of Sweet Dundee	x		x	(x)
51	Creeping Jane	x	x		
58	(The) Dark-Eyed Sailor	x		x	(x)
66	(The) Farmer's Boy	x		(x)	
71	(A) Fine Hunting Day	x			x
84	Go and Leave Me	x		x	
150	(The) Little Old Log Cabin	x		x	
166	(The) Mistletoe Bough	(x)		x	
218	(The) Saucy Sailor	(x)		x	
286	(The) White Cockade	(x)			x
291	(The) Wild Rover	x			x
308	(The) Young Sailor Cut Down	x			x
310	Your Faithful Sailor Boy	x		x	
total crossovers from JB to others		11	1	8	5
(x) = songs known by singer but not recorded					

Table 8.3: Crossover songs between the others

no	song title	JT	WP	FH
12	Barbara Allen (Ellen)	x		x
35	Break the News to Mother		x	x
61	Don't go Down the Mine Dad		x	x
96	Green Bushes	x	x	
158	Mother Machree		x	x
184	Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill		x	x
234	(The) Spotted Cow	x		x
255	Two Little Girls in Blue		x	x

A lack of correspondence between these repertoires may have been predicted considering the great number of songs available to vernacular singers such as the four considered here – songs written for the concert hall, the salon, the music hall and from broadsides, garlands, chapbooks and oral sources. Moreover, these singers were exercising in their different selections their own personal tastes in melodies and text of songs ‘as highly condensed and powerful symbols of personal identity’,³¹ as well as attempting to choose items which would go down well with their own audiences at their customary venues. Further, the widespread geographical locations in which these singers were born and lived most of their lives would result in further heterogeneity in their list of songs chosen, learned and sung. Finally, the protracted course of time between the birth of the earliest of these singers, Joseph Taylor (1833) and the death of the last singer, Walter Pardon (1996) – one hundred and sixty-three years – and the changing fashions in popular culture in that time, would have led to the gradual replacement of much of the repertoires; the abandoned items would be replaced, perhaps, by transient and commodified pieces learned through the development and wider availability of recording and broadcasting technologies.

In looking at the data for each of the singers separately, an important perspective becomes clear. The pivotal figure in this study, Jack Beeforth, shares a larger percentage of his songs than do the others. The comparative data are as follows:

³¹ Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, 55.

Table 8.4: Percentage of songs shared with the others

Jack Beeforth	: 14 songs (28%) of 50	shared with one or more of the others
Joseph Taylor	: 4 songs (13%) of 32	—
Walter Pardon	: 15 songs (8%) of 182	—
Frank Hinchliffe	: 14 songs (19%) of 74	—

Jack Beeforth appears in this perspective as having the most typical repertoire of this group, despite the geographical isolation of Fylingdale where he lived most of his life, and where he never owned record playing equipment (or a wireless before 1937). Walter Pardon's cottage in rural north-east Norfolk was in many ways as remote a location as Jack Beeforth's farm, but the Pardon repertoire is here shown to be the most individual and idiosyncratic of the four being considered, including that of the time-distant Joseph Taylor. Walter Pardon's collection of 92 78rpm gramophone records³² and his inclusion of some of the recorded songs in his own repertoire (including 'Galway Bay', 'The Miner's Dream of Home', 'When the Poppies Bloom Again', 'The Old Rustic Bridge') shows his willingness to take up and use material from even the most publicly accessible sources, and without these inclusions his repertoire would have been even more esoteric. In building up their repertoires, the varying ways in which these singers responded to the forces bearing on them – geographical location, accessibility of communication, personal choices, social class, the sheer volume of available material – seem to deny the application of a simple deterministic model in explaining why these men sang the particular collection of songs they did.

³² Rod Stradling, 'A listing of the 78rpm gramophone records owned by Walter Pardon', *Walter Pardon: Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, booklet, 28.

V: Selecting songs for comparison

One of the purposes of this part of the study is to identify songs which may productively be used in comparing Jack Beeforth's performances with the other three singers. Some problems of song availability are encountered here. Some songs known to be held by this group of singers were recorded in fragmentary or incomplete form (for example, Frank Hinchliffe's 'Banks of Sweet Dundee' and 'Barbra Allen'); some tunes were recorded without words, some words without tunes (for example, Walter Pardon's 'Old Joe the Boat is Going Over' and Frank Hinchliffe's 'The Wild Rover'); some songs were noted by their title only (for example, Joseph Taylor's 'The Cruel Mother', Jack Beeforth's 'The Mistletoe Bough' and Walter Pardon's 'There's a Light in the Window'). The tape recordings thought to have been made of some songs are not in the public domain (for example, Walter Pardon's 'Poor Roger Is Dead'). The selection of songs for comparing the performances of the four singers have, therefore, been taken from those which have been retrieved from commercial and, where possible, private recordings which are in a form substantial enough for productive comparison and analysis to be made. A summary of songs available for comparison from each of the singers is shown below:

Table 8.5: Number of songs available for comparison

	items in repertoire	songs available for comparison	percentage available for comparison
Jack Beeforth	50	38	76%
Joseph Taylor	32	16	50%
Walter Pardon	182	98	54%
Frank Hinchliffe	74	32	43%

The absence of songs common to all four makes us look at song type as an alternative model for the selection of songs for comparison. Further problems are encountered in such a

classification: the arbitrariness of classifications; the overlapping of categories; the inconsistencies produced when songs, apparently similar, are allocated to different categories; the difficulties of fitting some songs into any category; the argument that the whole classification exercise is crudely reductive and therefore unproductive. In his study of three Victorian singers (Sims Reeves, Sam Cowell and Henry Burstow), Vic Gammon sought to overcome some of these problems by identifying song type (where the ‘typology hinges on subject matter mediated by intent’)³³ and the dominant themes contained within each song. In this present study, it is proposed to use a much simplified adaptation of this model for a different purpose, that is, for the selection of songs for the comparison of performance in the absence of a common identical song.

In the Forward to the 1970 edition of *Traditional Tunes*, A. E. Green offered a ‘criterion of reliability’, which he said should be applied to collected versions of folk songs – that air and text be from the same informant; that the air be transcribed as far as possible as sung; that the text be complete in so far as the informant knows it, no less and no more; failing this, if collation has been undertaken that the nature and extent of the collation be made clear.³⁴ In the analysis of performance which follows these introductory notes, this ‘criterion of reliability’ self-evidently prevails, since what will be considered there will be what has been recorded in sound, rather than what has been described in words or interpreted by musical notation.

Sound recording techniques have, however, always allowed the possibility of subsequent modification to the recording, so that what seems to be a faithful reproduction of an item may be the result of intervention by the mediator. Intervention may be by a selection from an array of separate recordings to fabricate an apparently seamless whole. Unregarded material might be omitted. Elements which were not present in the original recording process might be introduced. Technological enhancement might be applied to some aspects of the

³³ Vic Gammon, “‘Not appreciated in Worthing?’”, 15.

³⁴ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes* (1970), vii.

recording. Further, the fidelity of performance represented by the recordings now to be considered, may be affected by a number of factors, such as imperfections in the equipment used for the original recording (and for later play-back), shortcomings of technical expertise on the part of the collector/recordist, the deterioration, over time, of the recording element (vulnerable carriers such as acetate tape and wax cylinders). The foregoing should be borne in mind when the results of the analysis are being reviewed.

The perspective from which the song types and song themes are drawn and defined here is clearly intra-cultural, since it is determined from the evaluation by one with long association with this music. The continuities apparent in the persistence of this genre of song during the last hundred years (the songs themselves, the way in which they are often performed, the enduring relevance the songs seem to have for some individuals and groups) gives support to the position that there is an emic competence in this evaluation, and that the genre is, in important ways, transparent and knowable to those who inhabit it. The rationale for the selection of particular songs for performance comparison is shown at the beginning of the discussion of each song type.

9

HOW FOUR MEN SING: AN AMATORY SONG

I: Introduction

In comparing Jack Beeforth's performance of the four selected songs, with the performances of the three featured singers, the following *modus operandi* is adopted:

- 1 the basic tune is set out as sung in verse one, after which the full text of the song is presented in standard orthography, except where the singer's idiosyncratic use of language needs to be shown,
- 2 song texts are sparsely punctuated, except where they are reproduced from sources other than direct transcription from the sound recording,
- 3 dialect and accent are shown by the use of Standard English characters representing only approximate pronunciation of words sung,
- 4 in the analysis of performance significant variations of tune are discussed and where necessary illustrated by notation,
- 5 the same schema of tune: text: analysis: is adopted for each of the singers, in the sequence 1 Jack Beeforth 2 Joseph Taylor 3 Walter Pardon 4 Frank Hinchliffe,
- 6 as the performance of each of these singers is worked through, appropriate references to, comparisons with, and contrasts against the performances of the other singers are discussed,
- 7 a summary of the outcomes of the analysis is given.

The CD of the songs analysed in the ‘How Four Men Sing’ chapters, is located inside the back cover of Volume I, and is set out as follows:

Table 9.1: Songs on Disc ‘How Four Men Sing’

track	song title	singer	running time
1	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	Jack Beeforth	4.59
2	The Gipsy’s Wedding Day	Joseph Taylor	1.47
3	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	Walter Pardon	4.26
4	The Golden Glove	Frank Hinchliffe	4.59
5	Last Valentine’s Day	Jack Beeforth	3.42
6	The White Hare	Joseph Taylor	2.40
7	The Huntsman	Walter Pardon	2.35
8	Whilst Forging of My Scales	Frank Hinchliffe	2.28
9	All Jolly Fellows	Jack Beeforth	2.50
10	Rufford Park Poachers	Joseph Taylor	1.36
11	All Jolly Fellows	Walter Pardon	1.04
12	All Jolly Fellows	Frank Hinchliffe	1.16
13	Go and Leave Me	Jack Beeforth	4.13
14	I Wish My Baby	Joseph Taylor	0.57
15	If I Were a Blackbird	Walter Pardon	3.54
16	The Gipsy’s Warning	Frank Hinchliffe	2.56

Note

Comic songs (songs concerning a joke or some foolery) figure importantly in Jack Beeforth’s repertoire, being a quarter of the total. They have not been included for analysis here, because Joseph Taylor included only one fragment of this song type in his song list, and Frank Hinchliffe only four, two of which were fragments.

This section sets out and compares the oral performance of the four featured men, each giving a song which is categorised as amatory, that is, which gives a narrative, episodic account of wooing, the pursuit of love, unrequited love or inaccessible love.

It has been shown earlier that few songs cross over between all four singers. Where a matching song is not in a singer's repertoire, an alternative song displaying similar thematic content has been substituted. The amatory songs set against Jack Beeforth's 'Banks of Sweet Dundee' are shown below:

Table 9.2: Amatory songs

singer	song	date recorded	singer's age	recorded by
Jack Beeforth	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	10.05.1974	83	David Hillery
Joseph Taylor	The Gipsy's Wedding Day	11.07.1908	75	Percy Grainger
Walter Pardon	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	02.08.1978	64	Mike Yates
Frank Hinchliffe	The Golden Glove	? .07.1976	53	Mike Yates

A. L. Lloyd, in suggesting that gradual change, not stasis, is the natural condition of song, claims that, in the realm of this music, change

... does not march in step with social change but proceeds at rather slower tempo. Moreover, like all other forms of art, the best songs keep their grip on the audience long after the conditions which gave rise to them have disappeared; they become accepted as a valuable patrimony of past ages... and only gradually do these pieces lapse into obsolescence and finally disappear from living folklore.¹

We need look no further than item number 9 in the singer/song matrix in Chapter 8, 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee', to find an example of a song which, to twenty-first century ears,

¹ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 157.

seems to epitomise the sentiments of typical Victorian melodrama, yet which featured in the repertoires of the three of the four profiled singers who were performing when this type of artistic presentation was going out of fashion (though Frank Hinchliffe remembered only the first three lines of the song). Joseph Taylor, who lived throughout all of the Victorian period, did not offer it. 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' has not always been highly regarded. Maud Karpeles, the editor of Cecil Sharp's *Collection of English Folk Songs* identified:

a number of songs with commonplace tunes accompanied by texts which are corrupt, fragmentary, or of little interest. These tunes are for the most part of the 'Come all ye' type, which Cecil Sharp has called the 'Stock-in-trade' of every English folk singer. This is the ABBA form of tune (sometimes with slight variations in each of the phrases) in which the B phrase ends in the dominant and the A phrase on the tonic, often twice repeated in the final phrase. 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' ... may be regarded as a prototype.²

A. L. Lloyd, however, found 'something of the old heroic breeze still stir[ring] even in such melodramatic broadsides of the nineteenth century as the ballad of Mary, the farmer's daughter on the banks of sweet Dundee, plotted against by her wicked uncle and the local squire'.³ The themes and dramatis personae, the moralising and the denouement displayed in this song came to represent commonplace elements in some accounts of Victorian popular culture; in 1850, Charles Dickens encountered many of these elements within one drama during a visit to 'one of Mr Whelk's [an invented working class companion's] favourite theatres'. In the play, the heroine

... called 'May Morning' (after a common custom among the English Peasantry) sustained ... every possible calamity of human existence ... and she did every conceivable and inconceivable thing with a pistol that could any-how be effected by that description of fire-arms.⁴

² Maud Karpeles (ed.), *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs Vol 1* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), xvii.

³ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 156.

⁴ Rosalind Vallance (ed.), *Dickens' London* (London: The Folio Society, 1966), 130.

A predatory Captain was ‘foiled in his diabolical purpose ... by means of knives and pistols, providentially caught up and directed at him by May Morning’. Will (May Morning’s sweetheart) was freed, fought off two strong men single-handed and the lovers were united, and it is from the drama of this scarcely credible universe that ‘The Banks of Sweet Dundee’ is derived. Frank Kidson includes ‘The Banks of Sweet Dundee’ in his collection *Traditional Tunes* claiming that it ‘has been popular in nearly every district in England’ and although he considered the words to be of no great merit, the song ‘is even now [1891] a great favourite with old folk who still remember it’. ‘Perhaps’, thought Kidson, ‘this is on account of the good air to which the song is set’.⁵ Twenty four years later, Kidson reconsidered the merits of ‘The Banks of Sweet Dundee’ in a short chapter on ‘Pressgang Songs’ in a new book,⁶ now believing that: ‘these [pressgang songs] have a greater dramatic effect than any other type before dealt with [and] no lack of thrilling and appealing material’. The fear of the pressgang seems to have lingered in popular memory long after its disappearance – for Jack Beeforth at least a couple of generations earlier than when he first learned ‘Sweet Dundee’. By his time, the pressgang was an historical reference as well as standing as metaphor for all the causes of separation that forcibly parted young lovers.

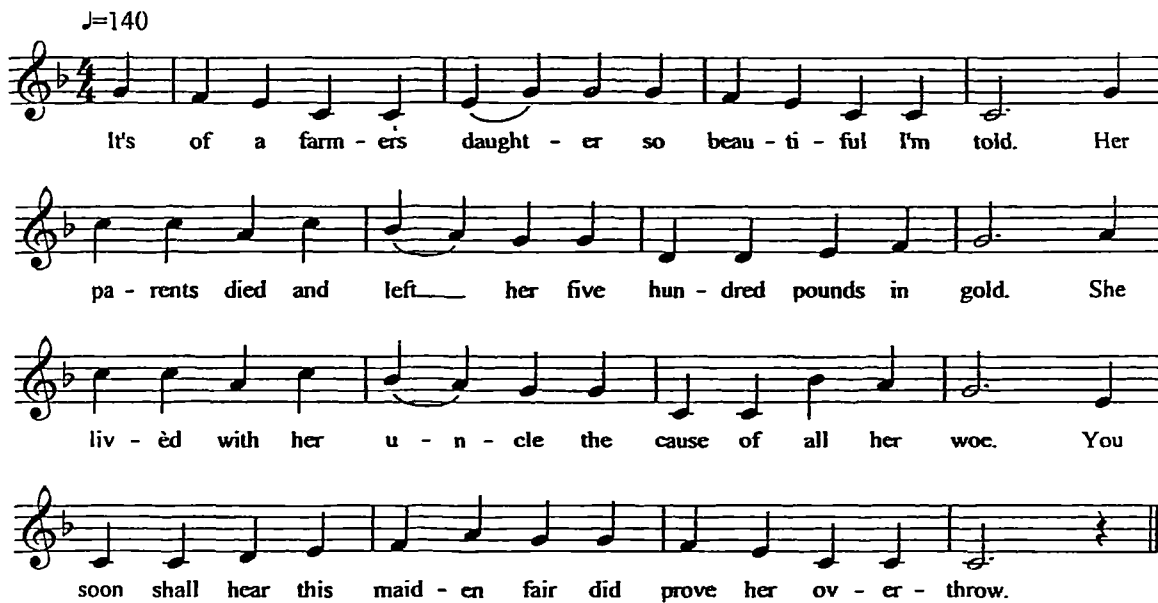
Jack Beeforth had not learned the song from *Traditional Tunes* of which he knew nothing. Nor is it likely that the person he learned it from had taken it from that book. Yet here we have the song again, recorded from Jack Beeforth over eighty years after the publication of the Kidson collection with the tunes and words substantially unaltered.

⁵ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 53.

⁶ Frank Kidson & Mary Neal, *English Folk-Song and Dance* [1915] (Wakefield: E.P. Publishing, 1972), 69.

II: Jack Beeforth: 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee'

$\text{♩} = 140$



It's of a farm - er's daught - er so beau - ti - ful I'm told. Her
pa - rents died and left her five hun - dred pounds in gold. She
liv - ed with her u - n - cle the cause of all her woe. You
soon shall hear this maid - en fair did prove her ov - er - throw.

- 1 It's of a farmer's daughter so beautiful I'm told.
Her parents died and left her five hundred pound in gold.
She livèd with her uncle the cause of all her woe
You soon shall hear this maiden fair did prove her overthrow.
- 2 Now her uncle he had a ploughboy young Mary loved full well
And in her uncle's garden their tales of love would tell.
There was a wealthy squire he oft came her to see
But still she loved her ploughboy on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 3 It was on one summer's morning her uncle went straightway.
He rappèd on her bedroom door and he this to her did say
Come rise up pretty Mary, a lady you may be
For the squire is waiting for you on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 4 Why a fig for all your squires, your lords and dukes likewise
Young William's hand appears to me like diamonds in my eyes.
Be gone unruly female you ne'er shall happy be
For I mean to banish William from the banks of sweet Dundee.

- 5 Now her uncle and that squire rode out one summer's morn.
Young William he's in favour her uncle he did say.
Indeed it's my intention to tie him to a tree
Or else I'll bribe the pressgang on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 6 And the pressgang came to William when he was all alone
He boldly fought for liberty but they was three to one.
The blood it flow in turrents, Come kill me now, says he,
I'd rather die for Mary on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 7 Next morn this maid was walking lamenting for her love
She met that wealthy squire down in her uncle's grove.
He threw his arms around her, Stand back base man, said she.
You've sent the only man I love from the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 8 And he threw his arms around her and tried to throw her down,
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning gown.
Young Mary took the weapons the sword she used so free
And she did fire and shoot that squire on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 9 And her uncle he overheard the noise and he hastened to the ground.
Since you have killed that squire I'll give you your death wound.
Stand back, then said young Mary, undaunted I will be
The trigger she drew and her uncle slew on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 10 Now the doctor he was sent for a man of noted skill,
And likewise came a lawyer for him to make his will.
He willed his gold to Mary who fought so manfully
And now she lives quite happy on the banks of sweet Dundee.

Jack Beeforth's phonology is strongly characteristic of the dialectal usage in the area where he had always lived. It has been shown in an earlier chapter that lexically, grammatically and phonetically his speech displays rich local forms, for example,

always : allus	don't : deeant	lapwing : teeafit
acre : yacker	every : ivvery	most : maist
children : bairns	four : fower	much : mich
churned : kernerd	from : fra	such : sike

He uses the definite article almost always in its commonly abbreviated form: t'. In listening to Jack Beeforth's singing of 'Sweet Dundee', however, only a few examples of this local dialectal form show through, lending some support to A. E. Green's premise 'that folk-songs

do not show a high incidence of dialect-usage, despite their being the property of people usually thought of as “classic” dialect speakers’.⁷

The dropping of the aspirate (where it appears in standard English) in the speechways of Jack Beeforth’s locality has long been a feature of the dialect here, as has the occasional insertion of the aspirate in words where it is normally absent. M.C. F. Morris comments:

As a rule, the aspirate is omitted in words requiring it, but not by any means so invariably as in some parts of England, and it is seldom inserted in words that do not need it: where it is so inserted the object is to give additional emphasis, e.g. hivvery yan of them (every one of them).⁸

Richard Blakeborough agrees that:

The country people, when speaking *naturally*, rarely use the aspirate, except as an intensive. Otherwise they have little use for it ... The aspirate, when misplaced by those speaking naturally, is only used to add greater force. “He’s mah henemy foor ivver”, leaves no doubt that the injury sustained is of an unbridgeable *character*.⁹

Blakeborough ridiculed the incorrect and intrusive use of the aspirate by some of the lower classes trying to ape the language of those they served, as ‘the vile and affected speech of the upper circles of Yorkshire flunkeys and maids, who try to improve upon their mother tongue. It holds no place in our folk-speech. It is hateful ...’¹⁰

Jack Beeforth’s ‘Sweet Dundee’ is replete with the intrusive ‘h’, with nine examples of this use, employed usually as an emphasiser, but also to move speech to a higher social plane. Four of the verses end with the refrain ‘hon the banks of sweet Dundee’, the ‘hon’ pronounced as if to emphasise that this is the song’s title. The singer goes on to use the added ‘h’ as a device to mimic the speech of the higher-caste protagonists in the song in verse two,

⁷ A .E. Green, ‘Folk-Song and Dialect’, 24.

⁸ M. C. F. Morris, *Yorkshire Folk Talk* (London: Brown, 1911), 58.

⁹ R. Blakeborough, *Wit, Character, Folklore and Customs of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, 501.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 502.

suggesting with faux-finesse that the wealthy squire, who ‘hoft came her [Mary] to see’ was of a status far above that of the ploughboy, Mary’s other suitor.

In verse five, both ‘uncle hand that squire rode out one summer’s morn’, here seemingly united by their intent and their class position. This last reference contains another of Jack Beeforth’s common usages: the replacement of the definite article by the demonstrative adjective, ‘that’. After his first appearance in verse two, the squire is described as ‘that’ squire on four of his six subsequent visits to the narrative which strongly suggests that this is a real squire who actually existed, not merely a character in a song. (After singing the piece, Jack Beeforth claimed that it was a ‘true story’.)¹¹ Moreover, the repeated use of the construction ‘that squire’ carries a certain pejorative nuance, overlaying the odium already borne by this nineteenth-century stereotype, as the audience is being conditioned to desire the squire’s undoing. Having himself once been a tenant farmer, Jack Beeforth’s own history would have given him some experience of the squire/yeoman economic relationship, so it should not be surprising that he sings all ten verses in one attempt with evident relish.

‘The interchanges of “t” with “th” ... are so numerous and various [in North Yorkshire]’, wrote the Reverend Morris, ‘that it is impossible to formulate rules with regard to them’.¹² The Beeforth pronunciation of ‘overthrow’ as ‘overtrow’ in verse one and of ‘threw’ as ‘trew’ in verses seven and eight are examples of this use here. Finally, in this account of Jack Beeforth’s use of dialect in his singing ‘may’ becomes ‘ma’ (as in ‘enigma’) in verse three. Two examples of the accented past tense ‘èd’ ending occur in verses one and two, but this archaic form is used as an aid for scansion rather than an example of dialect use.

¹¹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

¹² M. C. F. Morris, *Yorkshire Folk Talk*, 62.

The ten verses of 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' compel Jack Beeforth to round off the song with, 'It's a long un, though, isn't it?' and this is indeed one of the longest songs in the Beeforth corpus. The crowded detail of situation and character in the piece does not, however, impede the flow of the performance. The narrative is propelled onward textually by means of the singer's frequent linking of a succeeding verse to the one before by the insertion of a bridging device 'And' at the beginning of the new stanza, or in the same place by the use of a confidential 'Now'. Compare the more disjointed Catnach broadside version in Kidson's *Traditional Tunes*¹³ with the Beeforth treatment in the following verses:

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 2 | Kidson | : Her uncle had a ploughboy ... |
| | Beeforth | : Now her uncle he had a ploughboy ... |
| 5 | Kidson | : Her uncle and the squire rode out ... |
| | Beeforth | : Now her uncle and that squire rode out ... |
| 6 | Kidson | : The pressgang came to William ... |
| | Beeforth | : And the pressgang came to William ... |
| 8 | Kidson | : He clasped his arms around her ... |
| | Beeforth | : And he threw his arms around her ... |
| 10 | Kidson | : A doctor soon was sent for ... |
| | Beeforth | : Now a doctor he was sent for ... |

The Beeforth recordings which are here being considered were made when Jack was 83 years old and in poor health. His posture during his singing for us was always recumbent, he being in his sickbed, with his head and shoulders cradled by pillows. This arrangement, though allowing him some support, did nothing to improve his already poor breathing, and this is evident in his performance. He himself, however, was not given to excusing the quality of his singing on grounds of age or health, and any reference to these factors made during this analysis would not have found his approval.

¹³ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 54.

Nevertheless, breathing patterns are here sometimes involuntary and inappropriate, not chosen by the singer to add meaning or drama to the song, as for example, 1.3 when a laboured breath (breath = /) separates ‘the /cause’, in 6.4 ‘Dun /dee’, and in 7.2 ‘uncle’s /grove’. In spite of these breathing constraints, the pace of the song is sustained throughout its long narrative, with the ten verses having similar temporal values, ranging only between 28 and 30 seconds. The heptametric structure of each line helps the song to bowl along.

At more than ten syllables [per line] we enter a new prosodic world, interesting in its way, with many opportunities for variation and with its own kind of insistence for it seems that, simply to keep a grip on the mechanics of the line, we have to stress its metre as we recite it or read it ... These long, highly rhythmic lines are associated in our minds with the Victorians and their delight in reciting poetry.¹⁴

Fenton here uses Rudyard Kipling’s ‘Cholera Camp’, to illustrate how an iambic line of seven feet could be split into two lines of four and three (the ballad metre or ballad-measure) or presented convincingly as a single line – as in ‘Sweet Dundee’:

We’ve got the cholerer in camp – it’s worse than forty frights
We’re dying in the wilderness the same as Isrulites
It’s before us, an be’ind us, an’ we cannot get away,
An’ the doctor’s just reported we’ve ten more today!¹⁵

The line rhyming couplet pattern in ‘Sweet Dundee’ – aabb – acts both as an aid to the singer in remembering the song (though in this it is unevenly effective, for the 5.1 ending ‘morn’ is clearly a misremembered ‘day’, to rhyme with the second line’s ‘say’) and to stimulate an audience’s expectations. The story’s climax, in which the squire and the uncle are despatched by Mary, is described in verses 8 and 9 by means of lines containing internal rhymes which reinforce the action, are satisfying to sing and which feed the audience’s anticipation:

And she did fire and shoot that squire on the banks of sweet Dundee *and*
The trigger she drew and her uncle slew on the banks of sweet Dundee.

¹⁴ James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry* (London: Viking, 2002), 56-7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

The regular pace, referred to above, with which Jack Beeforth conducts this piece does not mean that rubato is entirely absent from the performance. Subtle changes in rhythm and emphasis are necessary, for example, when the singer has to accommodate additional words brought in to strengthen the storyline, or to bridge two verses, as in 2.1,



where ‘Now’ and ‘he’, though not essential inclusions, help to add some interest both textually and musically. Again, a slight variation of rhythm is heard as Mary, in direct speech, unable apparently to dwell on the word ‘squires’ for what would be its normally allotted three-crotchet span in the line, crops the bar in 4.1 thus:



and a similar figure occurs in 6.2 with the singer accentuating young William’s struggle with the pressgang by hastening the action on ‘liberty’ and once more shortening the bar:



Jack Beeforth gives this performance with a timbre which seems to emanate from somewhere between a tightened throat and a more relaxed nasal delivery, giving a controlled vibrato which from time to time throughout the song is vitiated by his failing respiratory condition, causing some words, especially those at line endings, to fade during their articulation. This song’s text carries many elements of melodrama but the singer performs it without histrionics. The use of vocal decoration is almost absent. An exclamatory whoop or

yelp on 'You' begins the last line of the opening verse, but there are no other examples of vocal ornamentation – no turns, mordents, shakes or trills; absent also are great variations in vocal amplitude.

Singers who perform without instrumental accompaniment have problems of selecting from their own internal musical resources a pitch in which they can confidently start, and effectively complete, the song. As already noted, practised vernacular singers such as Jack Beeforth seldom display hesitancy or awkwardness when going into a song. Here the recordist's prompt 'Right, we're away then', as the apparatus is switched on, is the only invitation the singer needs before immediately entering into the song, in a pitch which he maintains accurately through to the end. The tune's span of just an octave hardly stretches the singer's vocal range.

Jack Beeforth's singing of 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' is heard as a performance in which the drama of the story is driven along with little variation in stanzaic tempo, but where subtle rubato is sometimes introduced in a softened version of the local dialect, and where inappropriate punctuation is sometimes involuntarily made because of the singer's illness. The singer uses little ornamentation or variation in dynamics to embellish his simple vocalisation, here heard as a blending of open throat with a nasality which together give a controlled vibrato throughout. In a tune of the ABBA type having an octave range, Jack Beeforth's selection and sustaining of pitch throughout the duration of this ten verse song needs to be considered (as do other aspects of his performance) in the context of the recording, which was a single event – the recording was not selected from a range of 'takes', nor have any of the tape's contents been added to or deleted.

III: Joseph Taylor: 'The Gipsy's Wedding Day'¹⁰

$\text{♩} = 92$



My fa-ther is the King of the gip-sies that is true. My moth-er she learn-ed me some
camp-ing for to do. They put a pack up-on me back they
all did wish me well So I set off for Lon-don some fort-unes for to tell.

[version B]

- 1 My father is the king of the gypsies that is true,
My mother she learn-ed me some camping for to do.
They put the pack upon me back they all did wish me well,
So I set out for London Town, some fortunes for to tell.
- 2 Now as I was awalking up fair London street,
A handsome young squi-er I chanc-ed for to meet;
He view-ed my brown cheeks and he lik-ed them so well
He said, "Me little gipsy girl, can you me fortune tell?"
- 3 "Why yes, kind sir, give me hold of your hand,
Why you have got houses, you've riches and you've lands,
But all those pretty ladies you mun put them to one side.
For I'm the little gipsy girl that is to be your bride".
- 4 Now once I was a gipsy girl but now a squi-er's bride.
I've got servants for to wait on me and in me carriage ride.
The bells they rung so merrily and the sweet music did play,
And a jolly time we had upon the gipsy's wedding day.

¹⁰ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*.

[version A]¹⁷

- 1 My father is the king of the gipsies that is true.
My mother she learnèd me some camping for to do.
They put the pack upon me back they all did wish me well.
So I set out for London some fortunes for to tell.
- 2 As I was a walking up fair London street,
A handsome young squier I chancèd for to meet.
He view-ed my brown cheeks and he likèd them so well,
He said "Me little gipsy girl can you me fortune tell?"
- 3 "Oh yes, kind sir, give me hold of your hand.
Why, you have got riches you've houses and you've land.
But all those pretty ladies you must put them to one side,
For I'm the little gipsy girl that is to be your bride".
- 4 Now once I was a gipsy girl but now a squire's bride.
I've servants for to wait on me and in me carriage ride.
The bells they shall ring merrily and sweet music play,
And crown the ... [incomplete].

Joseph Taylor recorded 'The Gipsy's Wedding Day' on two separate occasions. The first recording (here the A version), was made by Percy Grainger during a long session at Brigg on Sunday 28th July 1906, where he collected 36 songs from 4 singers. 'Samizdat' copies of this recording were made from a cylinder at Cecil Sharp House, by members of an interest group c.1965. The quality of reproduction is poor, and this version has not been included on the CD which accompanies this study, although it represented part of the resource for Grainger's essay, 'Collecting with the Phonograph'.¹⁸ Reference to it is, nevertheless, made in this analysis, for some interesting comparisons emerge, when it is set beside Grainger's second recording (here the B version), made in London, on Saturday 11th July 1908, for the Gramophone Company (His Master's Voice).¹⁹ It was intended that this version would be released on a commercial record, but the plan was not realised until it was included in the

¹⁷ Vaughan Williams' Memorial Library: Percy Grainger cylinder, 24.

¹⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 220-1.

¹⁹ R. W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 27.

material for the LP *Unto Brigg Fair*, in 1972. This is the version which is reproduced on the accompanying CD.

It has been earlier shown that ‘The Banks of Sweet Dundee’ was not in Joseph Taylor’s collected repertoire. Another song in his corpus, however, contains textual, thematic, metrical and melodic characteristics which are useful in drawing comparisons between this singer and the other three we are considering here. Taylor’s ‘The Gipsy’s Wedding Day’ describes across-class courtship involving a squire; a potentially dangerous adventure; female heroism with the heroine travelling to, and finding a living in, London; a happy outcome – all themes which are handled, though at greater length, in ‘Sweet Dundee’. Moreover, the metrical structure of the text matches that of ‘Sweet Dundee’ since it appears in iambic heptameter; each four-line stanza is in the form of two rhyming couplets, as it is in ‘Sweet Dundee’, and there is an internal rhyme in 1.3 ‘They put the pack upon me back, they all did wish me well.’ The tune’s ABBA form suggests that it may have been a good vehicle for carrying other texts and so it has: ‘Despite the strictures and suspicions of many of the early collectors connected with the Folk Song Society, the tune (or versions of it) has done great service with many associated texts; among them might be mentioned “The Banks of Sweet Dundee”’.²⁰

Like Jack Beeforth, Joseph Taylor seems to have modified many dialectal features in his speech when he turned to singing. Percy Grainger had found that ‘dialect, not unnaturally, is richer in everyday speech than in folk-song singing ... they [singers] therefore, are not inclined to introduce local dialect phrases into their songs, but keep rather, to usual English ballad vocabulary ...’²¹ He claimed that he had never come across a song ‘sung exclusively and uniformly in dialect’. ‘Dialect words’ agrees Patrick O’Shaughnessy, ‘as a general rule,

²⁰ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

²¹ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 160-1.

seldom occur in English folk songs (the rule does not hold good in the North).²² In ‘The Gipsy’s Wedding Day’ there are no Lincolnshire dialect words at all in version A and only one (‘mun’ for ‘must’) in 3.3 in version B.

Grainger was keen to show how his singers handled the local accent in their songs and he used, in ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, a then-current phonetic system of vowel-accent marks to explain the phonology of these singers. Acknowledging that ‘it is, alas, impossible to render all phonetic subtleties by means of any practicable system of spelling or accents’, Grainger nevertheless applied the system to ‘The Gipsy’s Wedding Day’; some of his diacritics are shown below:²³

My father is the king ôf the gypsies that is trē-ü
 My mother she learn-èd me some camping for tê do.
 They put a pack upon mē back they all did è wish me well,
 So I set out for London some fortunes for to tell.

Nō once I was a gipsy gē-rl but now a squi-er’s bride;
 I’ve servants for to wait on me, and in mē carriage ride.
 The bells they shall ring merrily and sweet music plā-e(play)
 And crown the glad tidings of the gipsy’s wedding day.

In this song, Joseph Taylor makes scant use of the epenthetic device for which, in this vernacular, he has become well known: the adding of meaningless syllables to words in order to avoid singing one syllable to more than one note (exemplified currently by the English football supporters’ chant ‘Eng-er-land, Eng-er-land, Eng-er-land’). Here it is heard as an inserted textual trapping only once and fleetingly in 1.3 ‘... they all did è wish me well ...’ More apparent from the recording is the frequent use in this piece of the now-archaic

²² Patrick O’Shaughnessy (ed.), *Twenty-One Lincolnshire Folk-Songs from the Manuscript Collection of Percy Grainger* (London: Oxford University Press with the Lincolnshire Association, 1968), vii.

²³ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 221. A full account of Grainger’s use of diacritics is shown on pp 167-8 of ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’.

vocalised, separated and stressed past tense ‘èd’ ending in words such as ‘learnèd’, ‘chancèd’, ‘viewèd’ and ‘likèd’.

In a tune that is styled by Grainger as ‘rhythmic and swinging’, this extra syllable rather than the dying fall of the alternative ‘ ’d’ ending is important in retaining the momentum of the song. Grainger did not remark on this in his short chapter on ‘Added meaningless syllables’,²⁴ and it may be the case that it was such a commonplace feature in song as to merit no discussion; similarly ignored is Taylor’s dropping of the occasional initial /h/ as in 3.2 ‘Why, you ’ave got riches, you’ve ’ouses and you’ve land’. None of Jack Beeforth’s intrusive initial aitches, where none are normally used, are heard here. We may have expected, if Jack were singing, to hear ‘But hall those pretty ladies’ in version B 3.3 for emphasis, and to accentuate the class gap the gipsy girl was about to cross.

Grainger used this song in his essay on ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’ and it is, unusually, possible to compare his text and musical notation with what we hear on the recording. The Gramophone Company recording (version B) was made after the ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’ piece was written for the Folk-Song Society, so Grainger’s text and musical setting must have come from version A. There are, however, certain small but noticeable differences between what is heard on this, admittedly much deteriorated, recording and what appears in print:

1.3	recording	They put the pack
	text	They put a pack
2.1	recording	As I was awalking up fair London street
	text	As I was awalking a fair London street
3.1	recording	Oh yes, kind sir give me hold of your hand
	text	O yes, I returned give me hold of your hand

²⁴ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 162.

3.2	recording	Why you 'ave got riches, you've 'ouses and you've land
	text	For you have got riches, you've 'ouses and you've land
3.3	recording	But all those pretty ladies you must put them to one side
	text	But all those pretty maidens you must put them to one side

These disparities suggest that Percy Grainger has occasionally misquoted the text as sung, surely not wittingly, since he had a reputation for his accuracy in noting his fieldwork; wilful textual revision is unlikely since none of the alterations involves words or sentiments that would offend Edwardian ears. The possibility must not be entirely discounted that Grainger is drawing from a third uncatalogued or lost recording. There may be distortions of our own hearing of the words, modern improved methods of sound reproduction notwithstanding, since even after a handful of playings this cylinder's deterioration would have been well under way. The differences in the texts of the two recordings demonstrate how singers can gradually introduce changes in the performance of a song, in this case a passage of time of two years, 1906 to 1908.

Percy Grainger's indication of the notation for Joseph Taylor's singing of 'Gipsy's Wedding' as 'rhythmic and swinging' does not for this listener faithfully describe the performance. The even pace at which the song is taken (MM crotchet = about 92)²⁵ – with hardly a second difference in time between each verse – shows the singer's steady control with little rubato. The performance might be characterised as being delivered 'determinedly'. It is difficult to hear from version A where Joseph Taylor draws breath. In version B it is at the end of lines 1, 2, and 4 except in 1.4 where he breathes immediately between the last two words 'to /tell'. This aberrant line draws attention to Taylor's apparent resolution throughout the song to run together the final couplet of each stanza, and the text shows one reason for

²⁵ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 220.

this – the narrative in the first three verses becomes more natural and coherent where there is linkage between these two lines; the last verse’s final couplet ties together the account of the actual wedding day.

The tune, which ‘bears some resemblance to “The Blue Bells of Scotland”’,²⁶ is in the major, Ionian, mode, and has been transposed by Grainger from the key in which it was recorded (‘D, E?’)²⁷ to the key of F in order, perhaps, to fit more readily within the stave for purposes of presentation and, more likely, so that it would be within the compass of Folk-Song Society members’ voices. Joseph Taylor’s use of vocal ornamentation is encouraged at the conjunction of lines 3 and 4, for example in verse 1: a leading note on ‘me’ into a sustained and bleated ‘well’ on F encompassing an alluded lower mordent. This, at the same time as it accentuates the key note, prepares the singer for the following climactic device, a sliding expressive figure through the major second to the major third (F through G to A). Grainger hears this passage thus:²⁸

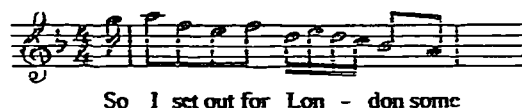


where the staccato demisemiquavers are presumably so marked to indicate a glottal vibrato. Joseph Taylor uses similar ornamentation throughout the song – there are three other examples in the first verse alone:

²⁶ Patrick O’Shaughnessy, *Twenty-One Lincolnshire Folk-Songs*, 35.

²⁷ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 220.

²⁸ *Ibid.*



In each of these musically falling phrases, the first on a single syllable and the others on a two-syllable word, Taylor embellishes the tune by introducing an upper mordent mirroring his lower mordent in an upward moving phrase previously identified. These devices working in parallel with the strong vibrato in his vocal delivery give a resonant well-produced tone and projection creating a most pleasing effect, and the jaunty swagger in the performance lends it a flavour almost of the music hall. Joseph Taylor's performance here shows, like Jack Beeforth's, that his natural dialect is modified in song, though local forms in pronunciation are often heard between melismatic passages.

Although rubato is almost a *sine qua non* of singing without musical accompaniment, here it is hardly noticeable as the singer, resolutely and without histrionics, makes his way through the song's four verses a few feet from Percy Grainger, one of the leading musicians of that time. We may imagine Grainger the enthusiast, unable to restrain himself from gently beating time, helping his favourite singer to perform 'his effortlessly high notes, sturdy rhythms and clean unmistakable intervals [which] were a sheer delight to hear'.²⁹ Joseph Taylor's performances of 'The Gipsy's Wedding Day' show an elderly man (Taylor was 74 and 76

²⁹ Percy Grainger, *Program-Note on "Lincolnshire Posy"*.

respectively when these versions A and B were recorded) in good control of his breathing and vocality. The song demands a range of a major third above the octave, and Taylor's tunefulness, timing and techniques of musical decoration produce, in what is after all a banal song, a piece endowed with much craftsmanship and great clarity.

IV: Walter Pardon: 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee'³⁰

$\text{♩} = 134$

It's of a farm - er's daugh - ter so beau - ti - ful I'm told. Her
par - ents died and left her five hun - dred pounds in gold.
She lived with her un - cle the cause of all her woe. And
soon you'll hear this mai - den fair has caused his ov - er - throw.

- 1 It's of a farmer's daughter so beautiful, I'm told.
Her parents died and left her five hundred pounds in gold,
She lived with her uncle, the cause of all her woe,
And soon you'll hear this maiden fair has caused his overthrow.
- 2 Her uncle kept a ploughboy, who Mary loved quite well,
And in her uncle's garden her tale of love did tell,
It's of a wealthy squire oft-times came her to see,
Still Mary loved her ploughboy on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 3 Her uncle rose one summer's morn and straight made his way,
Knocked at Mary's bedroom door and unto her did say,
Rise up, rise up, my Mary, a lady you shall be,
For the squire's come to wed you on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 4 I care not for your squires, your lords and dukes likewise,
Young William's eyes appear to me like diamonds in the skies,
Begone then, said her uncle, you ne'er shall happy be,
For I mean to banish William from the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 5 The press-gang came to William while he was all alone,
Bravely he fought for liberty, but they were ten to one,
The blood did flow in torrents, Oh, kill me now, cried he,
For I'd rather die than Mary on the banks of sweet Dundee.

³⁰ Walter Pardon, *A World without Horses* (London: Topic Records TSCD514, 2000).

- 6 As Mary was a-walking lamenting for her love,
She met the wealthy squire all in her uncle's grove,
He put his arm around her, Stand off, young man, said she,
You've slain the only lad I love on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 7 He put his arm around her to throw her to the ground,
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning gown,
She took the weapons from him and swore she would go free,
She fired and shot the squire on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 8 Her uncle overheard the noise and hastened to the ground,
Since you have killed the squire I'll give you your death wound,
Stand off, stand off, said Mary, undaunted I will be.
She the pistol drew and her uncle slew on the banks of sweet Dundee.
- 9 A doctor then was sent for, a man of noted skill,
Likewise came a lawyer for him to sign his will,
He willed his gold to Mary, who fought so manfully,
He closed his eyes, no more to rise on the banks of sweet Dundee.

This recording of 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' was made by Walter Pardon in 1978 when he was 64 years old and in apparent good health, for he went on singing in public until 1989, deciding when he was 75 that his voice was not strong enough.³¹ After that, he sang only at home where he was born in Knapton, Norfolk, crafting and performing his own songs, to himself, in his own vernacular.

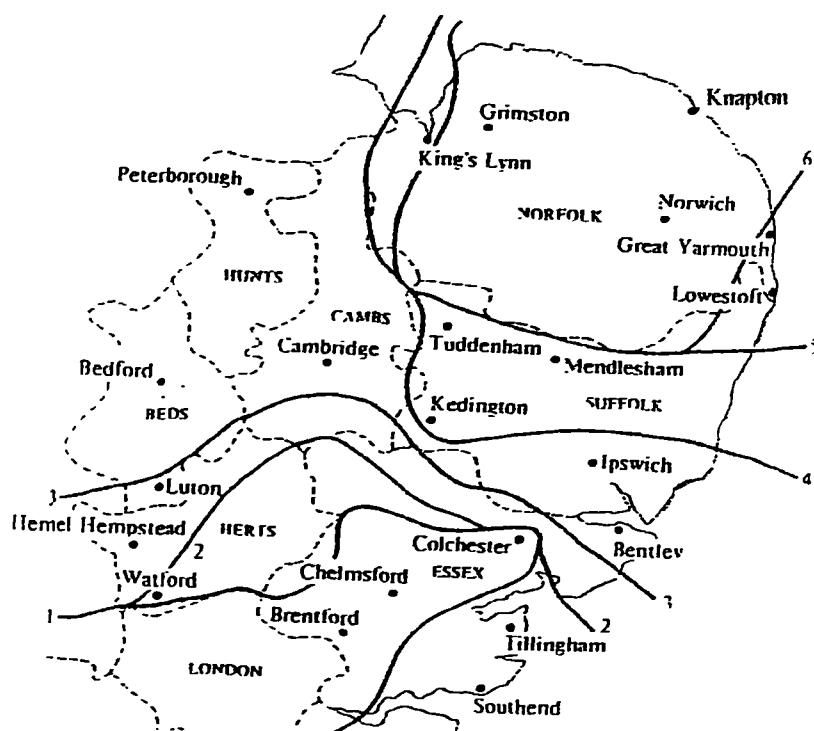
The dialectologist, Peter Trudgill, has set out to show that the mechanisms involved in sound changes which bring about modifications in dialect operate not suddenly but gradually.³² From his studies, it is possible to see the process of transmission and change in other traditional forms of expression, including vernacular song. In his diachronic study of specific vowel changes and vowel mergers in Norfolk, Trudgill shows how the spread of metropolitan phonetic influences northwards and eastwards, and probably from the middle class downwards, has affected local speech patterns in this region. The map (Map. 9.1) uses

³¹ Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, *FMJ*, 7:2 (1996), 264-5.

³² Peter Trudgill, *On Dialect: Social and Geographical Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 90.

selected phonetic exemplars to show the gradually shrinking areas of traces of the earlier speech forms (briefly, contour 1 shows areas of these dialect survivals to the north and east of London in the 1930s, intermediate contours show similar survivals at succeeding dates, with contour 6 demonstrating the position in the 1980s). Trudgill calls this development ‘The East Anglian Merger’.³³

Map 9.1: Trudgill’s The East Anglian Merger



Walter Pardon’s Knapton is positioned at the extreme north-easterly fringe of this region and Trudgill’s study (1930s to 1980s) covers a time-span which is neatly embraced by Walter’s life (1914–1996). As a rural artisan who spent all his life apart from his military service in the locality, Walter should be expected, after Trudgill, to be a liberal user of the rich corpus of linguistic elements in the local dialect. In his singing, though, Walter calls on only the phonological aspects of his dialect – sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation, since his texts,

³³ Peter Trudgill, *On Dialect*, 91.

which chiefly originate from outside his locality, largely determine grammatical, lexical and semantic features. Yet it is impossible to listen to his ‘Sweet Dundee’ without being aware of the Norfolk connection as early as the song’s first line. (For the following selections of text Standard English characters are used to represent only approximate pronunciation of the words as sung). There are many examples during the performance of Norfolk vowel shadings in spite of the singer’s probable softening of the dialect, including the following:

(s o = standard orthography w p = Walter Pardon)

- 1.1 s o It’s of a farmer’s daughter so beautiful I’m told
w p It’s of a farmer’s daughter so bootiful Oi’m told
- 3.1 s o Her uncle rose one summer’s morn and straight he made his way
w p Her uncle rose one summer’s morn and stright ’e mide ’is wigh
- 4.1 s o I care not for your squires your lords and dukes likewise
w p I care not for your squires your lords and dooks loikwise
- 4.2 s o Young William’s eyes appear to me like diamonds in the skies
w p Young William’s oise appear to me loike diamonds in the skoise.

These vernacular forms of speech superficially overlay the song and do not imbue it with any profound sense of its being autochthonously ‘Norfolk’, merely that it is in some ways ‘Norfolkish’, in the same way as the Beeforth rendering of this same song is of the old North Riding. Moreover, the clipped aitches in ‘e’ and ‘is’ and ‘er’ are a feature of many English regional speechways, but here there are no instances of an added initial /h/ where none is usually present, which Jack Beeforth may have wanted to use as an emphasiser or signifier.

It seems clear that the vowel sounds, the monophthongs (where the vowel is relatively pure) and the diphthongs (which combine vowel and glide) importantly differentiate, and identify phonologically, English regional accents and Walter Pardon gives us these sounds in profusion. It was noted in the Jack Beeforth analysis of ‘Sweet Dundee’ and in Joseph Taylor’s ‘Gipsy’s Wedding’ that they both used the archaic separated and stressed ‘əd’ past

tense ending. Walter Pardon does not use it. In singing 1.3 Walter replaces Jack's 'lived' – a scansion device – with 'lived', the scanning being achieved by the sustaining of the final 'gold' in the previous line, eliminating the anacrusis 'she' and moving the word to the subsequent bar, where it is stressed.

In verse 3.2 where Jack Beeforth has 'He rapped on her bedroom door ...', Walter Pardon sings 'Knocked on Mary's bedroom door ...', once again the implied anacrusis is left out and the scanning secured by the accenting of 'Knocked' in the following bar. This shifting of stress is used only at the beginning of 5 of the 45 lines in the text and two of the occurrences are associated with the 'èd' figure found in comparative versions (for example, Kidson's 'Traditional Tunes' and Jack Beeforth) shown earlier. The three other usages occur in places where the singer could sensibly insert an auxiliary: 5.2 '(He) Bravely fought for liberty'; 8.2 '(Oh) Since you've shot the squire'; 9.2 '(And) Likewise came a lawyer'. By eschewing the possible auxiliaries, Walter Pardon is clearly intent on breaking up the rhythms and adding some interest to this long song.

His treatment of the piece is unostentatious; he did not care for a histrionic style of singing either for himself or others: '... he was not too impressed [during his official invitation to the American Bicentennial Celebrations] with the Appalachian ballad singer Nimrod Workman who liked to "act out" a ballad on stage. Songs, according to Walter, were for singing and that was exactly what he did'.³⁴

During this relaxed performance, Walter Pardon uses breathing patterns to help his phrasing of the song, breathing at the end of every line and inserting an additional breath at pauses in the story, where he wants to emphasise, and separate, the action (breath = /):

4.3 'Begone then' said her uncle/ 'you ne'er shall happy be'/.

³⁴ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, booklet, 7.

5.3 The blood did flow in torrents/ 'Oh kill me now' cried he /.

but not:

1.3 She lived with her uncle, the cause of all her woe /.

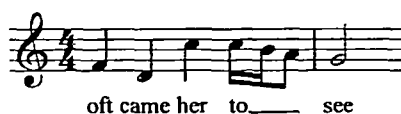
Jack Beeforth and Joseph Taylor have shown how unaccompanied vernacular singers are able to control the pace of a performance from stanza to stanza, while introducing hints of rhythm change into the piece. Walter Pardon's sense of pace is equally in control, with each verse of this song being of almost identical temporal value; rubato, subtle as it is, is perhaps most evident in verse 8, where the breath intakes divide the action and the dense text, and internal rhyming in line 4 encourages the singer to quicken the tempo:

Her uncle overheard the noise and hastened to the ground/.
'Since you've killed the squire/ I'll give you your death wound'/.
'Stand off, stand off,' said Mary/ 'undaunted I will be'/.
She the pistol drew and her uncle slew/ on the banks of sweet Dundee.

The key in which Walter Pardon starts the song (C) could be described, since there are no flattened or sharpened elements, as being in the Ionian or 'doh' mode, where Jack Beeforth sings it in the mixolydian. The singer has found it difficult to maintain this key, and during the nine verses the pitch rises gradually, until by the end it is a semitone higher. The pitch, however, is suited to the singer's vocal texture and well within his vocal capabilities; the song's nine-note range B – C is apparently effortlessly sung. The most demanding and rewarding melodic interval, a seventh leap (for example in 1.3 D to C in 'of all') is untroubled.

This performance of 'Sweet Dundee' is almost entirely without vocal decoration: the last word in each stanza – 'Dundee' in all but the first verse – has a dying fall ending almost as parlando, but the listener has to attend carefully to hear suggestions of other ornamentation. A faint melisma in the very first line of the song on 'farmer's daughter' is heard, but it does

not occur again in the same place in succeeding verses. In 2.3 and in three other verses in the same place, the singer introduces a falling melismatic phrase:



which perhaps Joseph Taylor would have seized on to produce one of his flourishes, but in Walter Pardon's singing such figures come almost as a surprise. Walter's voice has a thin, reedy quality in which the vibrato is present but sparsely used; a pronounced back dentality in his articulation is evident, and this may be associated with the dialect sound-system which he grew up with, whilst the nasality of the voice itself is one of its chief characteristics. The recording and reproduction is of a far higher quality than that heard from the first two singers, but the clarity of the performance heard here is only in part due to technology, as those who have heard him in live performance may testify.

Walter Pardon is not a flamboyant singer. His use of dynamics is restrained with little variation in intensity. He does not act out his songs and uses little vocal ornamentation, whilst his use of rubato is not prominent or frequent. His vibrato carries none of the marked shaking, throbbing or bleating which characterises the singing of Joseph Taylor; like Taylor and Jack Beeforth, he commands the pace of the song and does not appear to be daunted by the experience of singing for a recordist. What may be heard here is a performance of sincerity, and considering the textual temptations, without any trace of pathos or sentimentality. The song's text may not hold a convincing storyline for the twenty-first century, but Walter Pardon carries the song with simplicity and lucidity, as though convinced of the song's time, place and characters:

We may search our maps in vain for The Banks of Sweet Dundee ... but we will never find it there. Instead, we must look within our own hearts to discover that world which so entranced Walter Pardon, his Uncle Billy and all the other generations of singers ...³⁵

³⁵ Michael Yates. *A World without Horses*, booklet, 17.

V: Frank Hinchliffe: 'The Golden Glove',³⁶

$\text{♩} = 75$



A jol - ly young squire — near Tim - worth we hear. He
 court - ed a no - ble - man's daugh - ter so dear. And for — to get marr - ied it
 was their in - tent — A - ll friends and re - la - tions had giv'n their con - sent.

- 1 A jolly young squire near Timworth we hear
 He courted a nobleman's daughter so dear
 And for to get married it was their intent
 All friends and relations had given their consent.
- 2 The time was appointed for the wedding day
 A young farmer he was chosen to give her away
 But as soon as the farmer the lady did spy
 "Oh, my heart", this fair lady, the lady did cry.
- 3 Instead of getting married she took to her bed
 Where the thoughts of the farmer still ran in her head
 The thoughts of the farmer still ran in her mind
 And a way for to gain him she quickly did find.
- 4 Coat, waistcoat and trousers she then did put on
 And she went a-hunting with her dogs and her gun
 She hunted all around where the farmer did dwell
 For she knew in her heart that she loved him so well.
- 5 Now she oft time did fire but nothing did kill
 At length the young farmer came into the field
 And for to have discourse with him it was her intent
 With her dogs and her gun for to meet him she went.

³⁶ Frank Hinchliffe, *In Sheffield Park* (London: Topic Records 12TS308, 1977).

- 6 "I thought you'd have been at the wedding," she cried,
"To wait upon the squire and to give to him his bride."
"Oh no" said the farmer "the truth to you I'll tell
I couldn't give her away for I love her so well."
- 7 The lady was pleased to hear the farmer so bold,
She handed him a glove that was studded with gold,
She said that she had found it while coming along,
As she was a-hunting with her dogs and her gun.
- 8 The lady went home with her heart full of love,
And gave out a notice that she had lost her glove,
"And the man who shall find it and bring it unto me,
Oh, the man who shall find it his jewel I'll be."
- 9 As soon as the farmer did hear of the news,
Straightway with the glove to the lady he goes,
And said "My honoured lady I've brought you your glove,
And I should be pleased if you'd grant me your love."
- 10 "Your love's already granted", the lady replied,
"For I love the sweet breath of a farmer", she cried.
"I'll attend to the dairy and the milking of the cows,
Whilst my jolly young farmer goes whistling as he ploughs."
- 11 "And now we are married I'll tell of all fun,
How I hunted a farmer with a dog and a gun.
And now that I have got him well tied in a snare,
I'll enjoy him forever I'll vow and declare."

Although Frank Hinchliffe had 'The Banks of Sweet Dundee' in his repertoire, it has been recorded from him only in fragmentary form; Ian Russell noted only three lines in the study of this singer.³⁷ The replacement song from the Hinchliffe repertoire which has been selected for analysis, 'The Golden Glove', carries similar thematic elements, textual motifs and sentiments to 'Sweet Dundee'. In this song, the actors are nobleman's daughter, squire and young working farmer, and whilst they all occupy higher social stations than those in 'Sweet Dundee', their relative social positioning is similar to that in the other song. In the happy ending, the squire is thwarted – seemingly the traditional outcome for this genre of song –

³⁷ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 225-7.

and the lady and farmer are married. The text and melody follow closely the version in *English Folk-Songs for Schools*³⁸ and it is from this source that Frank Hinchliffe or his informant probably learned the song.

Ian Russell in his account of Frank Hinchliffe's life has little to say about Frank's use of dialect, either conversationally or in his songs, and it is only in his reporting of direct speech that there may be found a few clues of its usage, for example:

‘A lot of t’owd farmers, you know, when tractors come on t’ go, they were pulling ’em down.’³⁹

and

‘You sempt [seemed] to pick up one that you liked.’⁴⁰

and again

‘... you couldn’t do nowt a Sunday. Only reet essential work.’⁴¹

From the few examples recorded it seems that Frank Hinchliffe did use local dialect inflections, abbreviations and pronunciations in his speech, though with no rich use of local dialectal vocabulary. In this he is not unusual:

Most English people ... betray their geographical origin much more through their accents [the phonetic or phonological aspect of dialect] than through their vocabulary or grammar. This vast majority speaks mainstream varieties of English, standard and non-standard which resemble one another quite closely, and which are reasonably mutually intelligible.⁴²

In this performance the phonetic characteristics of the local dialect are softened or suppressed as in the following:

4.2 ‘ she went a-hunting’ and 4.3 ‘ she hunted all around’

³⁸ S. Baring-Gould, *English Folk-Song for Schools*, 32-3.

³⁹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 71.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴² Peter Trudgill & J K Chambers (eds), *Dialects of English – Studies in Variations* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), 2.

where the standard English /u/ replaces the general Northern short pronunciation, though in the same verse line 4, ‘where’ becomes ‘wheer’, echoing the ‘their : theer’ pronunciation in 1.4. Throughout this song instances of the post-vocalic /r/ occur, for example in 1.1 ‘hear’, 1.2 ‘daughter’ and ‘dear’, but this seems to be of inconsistent and arbitrary usage. Only once in this song does Frank use the intrusive initial aspirate, where none is sounded in standard pronunciation: 9.3 ‘honoured’. Is this perhaps because that is the way he usually pronounced the word? More likely, the emphasis here is used to heighten the formality of the courtship between the gauche and unwitting farmer and the scheming lady, at the climax, just when her trap is sprung. For the most part then, there is little in the linguistic geography that would place this singer specifically in South Yorkshire, although there remains a strong Northern colouring in the dialect where it occasionally shows; this in spite of the possibility of the singer’s intentionally moderating his delivery when being recorded – putting on what he believes is his best showing for posterity.

In the treatment of the narrative of this eleven-verse song, Frank Hinchliffe gives some echoes of Walter Pardon’s handling of ‘Sweet Dundee’. Frank is also an undemonstrative singer whose vocal demeanour betrays no sense of the over-dramatic in what, given the story and the potential audience dynamics, could easily become a theatrical performance; no passion is heard, for example, in ‘the noble lady’s *coup de foudre* for her social inferior’⁴³ in 2.4 ““Oh, my heart” this fair lady, the lady did cry”; no humour is apparent from the delivery of the last verse in which the lady boasts of her trophy, the farmer.

The metrical structure of this piece is the same as that of ‘Sweet Dundee’ – iambic heptameter – but Frank Hinchliffe’s gentle and relaxed delivery conceals the pace with which he gives the song which, stanza for stanza, is actually about five per cent faster than either

⁴³ Roy Palmer, *Bushes and Briars*, 28.

Jack Beeforth's or Walter Pardon's 'Sweet Dundee'. Like these other two, Frank Hinchliffe sustains the song's regular pace, verse by verse, with almost no variation in elapsed time between them. His breathing, always at the end of each line, helps him both to control this stanzaically measured performance and to infuse it with a hypnotic sensibility which is reinforced by the sparse rubato. Rubato is heard most starkly in this song in 6.5, where a stumbling 'I couldn't give her away,' accompanies an involuntary and apparently emotionally induced gulp, serving the pathos of the rest of the line 'for I loved her so well'. Elsewhere rubato is subtly introduced by a brief change of pace to emphasise important places in the story, for example stressing, in 6.1 'the wedding', and in 8.4 'the man who...'

Frank Hinchliffe, according to Ian Russell, 'lays great stress on the importance of narrative',⁴⁴ and if the singer's intention by pausing at the end of each line, is to allow the listener time to ponder on the events as they unravel, then here it seems to work. It is particularly effective at the end of 1.3 where the falling phrase is briefly suspended on 'intent'. The clarity of the diction also helps the audience to follow the story. The song's tune is closely related to that used by Jack Beeforth for his 'Stow Brow' and is in the Ionian or doh mode, with the single deviation of a sharpened fourth, the E natural, occurring towards the end of line 2 in each verse.

Frank Hinchliffe's choice of pitch is not well-founded here. He delivers the song in B flat, a key which he sustains faithfully from beginning to end – a noteworthy accomplishment for an unaccompanied singer of a long song – but in which discomfort is heard at the lower end of the voice range. Importantly this occurs on the B flat ending, where uncertainty, wavering or fading is often evident (for example in 3.4 'find'). The rest of the ten-note compass of the

⁴⁴ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 75.

song is negotiated confidently, including the tricky downward leap from D to F (for example in 1.3 'it was').

In this performance, the song's melodic line is almost totally unembroidered by vocal ornamentation. Ian Russell has identified in Frank's singing technique 'decoration ... of an anticipatory kind consist[ing] of leaps and slides'.⁴⁵ This is present here but at so unobtrusive a level that it is almost undetectable, for example, a slurring in:

3.1 'her bed' and 6.1 'She cried'.

The Hinchliffe vocal timbre, like Walter Pardon's, is carried by a thin nasality in which the rather soft vibrato sometimes comes close to causing him to sing in a crooning, sentimentally contemplative manner. The four line-endings in verse 8: 'love', 'glove', 'me' and 'be' are examples of this tendency, which may on the occasion of the recording have been stimulated by the intimacy and privacy of the microphone. This singer had, in any case, 'a plaintive, almost delicate tone used at home', which contrasted with 'the more robust style that he reserv[ed] for the pub.'⁴⁶

Frank Hinchliffe shows in this performance a moderation in most of its aspects, the accent of the local dialect is tempered and the dramatic approach to the song is untheatrical with no attempt at melodramatic or humorous devices. The song is unhurried and evenly delivered verse by verse with little rubato, vocal decoration or variation in dynamics, and because the initial choice of pitch was not well judged it was maintained to the end only with evident unease. This last feature, which seems to commend Frank's sense of pitch, also questions his capacity to shift pitch during a song, or his confidence to stop singing and start again in a more singable key. The discipline of the recording process may bear some responsibility

⁴⁵ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 75.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

here. This is a spare and vocally undecorated performance, depending on its acceptance as a pleasing musical experience largely on the clarity and tunefulness of the voice, the evident modesty and sincerity with which the song is delivered, and perhaps an audience already familiar with unaccompanied, acoustic, vernacular singing. This last condition, if true, must also embrace all those singers and songs reviewed in this chapter, for the aural and oral universe in which they learned and sang these songs is shrinking, and most audiences are not practised in listening to music produced by the solitary, unadorned human voice.

10

HOW FOUR MEN SING: A SPORTING SONG

I: Introduction

This section sets out and compares the performance of the four featured men, each singing a song which is categorised as sporting, that is, which describes or reflects on a sport or sporting event. There is no matching title for the Beeforth song from the other three singers so in each case an appropriate alternative is selected.

Table 10.1: Sporting songs

singer	song	date recorded	singer's age	recorded by
Jack Beeforth	Last Valentine's Day	10.05.1974	83	David Hillery
Joseph Taylor	The White Hare	09/11.07.1908	75	Percy Grainger
Walter Pardon	The Huntsman	25.06.1978	64	Mike Yates
Frank Hinchliffe	While Forging of My Scales and Springs	02.09.1970	47	Ian Russell

It has been previously shown that Jack Beeforth, central in this study, was a man who had been devoted to fox-hunting for all of his active adult life; the hunting songs which he sang held a relevance for him which went beyond the merely imaginary, for he was a frequent and

enthusiastic participant in the sport. He would have thought it appropriate that one of his hunting songs, 'St Valentine's Day', should be selected to compare in performance with those of other singers, and he would have seen in this comparison the elements of rivalry, for he was by nature a competitive man. Although Joseph Taylor's corpus lacked the complete version of a fox-hunting song ('The Yarborough Hunt' is a fragment) his song 'The White Hare', which is selected for comparison, is an example of a song which celebrates the chase, the quarry and the beagles. Walter Pardon's 'The Huntsman' is his only example of a sporting song and is therefore self-selected to set alongside those of the other singers under this song type. Frank Hinchliffe's three fox-hunting songs ('A Few Jovial Sportsmen', 'A Fine Hunting Day' and 'Oughtibridge Trail Hunt') were recorded from him only as fragments, therefore his 'While Forging of My Scales and Springs' – a song about angling – has been selected, imperfect though the sound reproduction is here.

The four pieces for this analysis are of a type which offer a commentary on men's pursuit of a creature where certain unilateral conventions are observed, and where the hunters' enjoyment of the sport is at least as important as any utilitarian outcomes which may be associated with it. The role and function of this song type is in the reinforcing of group identity and in the emphasising of the otherness of those outside their minority interest. The celebration of these rural sports in song may not now meet with universal goodwill, but among these sports' *aficionados* such a song's effect would be to reinvigorate their attachment to their pursuit and their pride in being exponents of it.

All four of these songs contain a chorus after each verse, which indicates that the pieces were capable of featuring during communal activities, after hunts, at club meetings or annual suppers. It would be here that the songs' role, function and effect would most propitiously be displayed with the assembly expected to join heartily in the chorus. Although the songs feature disparate quarry – fox, hare, fresh-water fish – important themes are held in common:

the anticipation of the day's sport, the conviviality associated with it (for even the apparently lone angler is surrounded by fellow fishermen who closely watch the activities of the others), the hunting and the death of the quarry.

The sub-themes contained in the idea of hunting are important to note. The extolling of the quarry's qualities, often anthropomorphic in nature, imbues the fox, hare or fish with an essential worthiness and the ultimate conquest therefore as something of merit. The endurance, elusiveness, hauteur and intelligence of the four animals here are to be challenged, setbacks in the chase to be overturned by the superior qualities of the hunters. A heightened competitiveness in the angler's skill is implied, for he is outwitting both fish and fellow angler. The self-congratulation and triumphal exclamations of the hunters at the end is, they would say, excusable and permissible after the long and difficult pursuit, and the final mastering of an opponent in its own terrain.

II: Jack Beeforth: 'Last Valentine's Day'

♩=105

Last Val-en-tine's Day when bright Phoe-be shone clear. Oh we had not been hunt-ing for
more than one year. When I mount-ed Black's Lov-ing but the roan let me fall. I
heard the horn sound and the hunts-man did call Tall-y - ho - o - o - o -
o - o With hark for-ward. Ooz - ay tall - y ho.

- 1 Last Valentine['s] Day when bright Phoebe shone clear.
Oh, we had not been hunting for more than one year.
When I mounted Black's Loving but the roan let me fall,
I heard the horn sound and the huntsman did call

Tally-ho - o - o - o - o - o
With hark forward - oozay tally-ho
- 2 Hark, hark into cover, Lord Hampton he cried.
He no sooner spoke than a fox they espied.
It being a signal, he crackèd his whip,
Tally-ho, was the words and then hounds they did slip.
- 3 Then up rode Dick Dawson who cared not a fig,
Made a bolt at a ditch when t'aud mare tumbled in.
Aye, and as he was a-creeping he spièd bold Ren,
With his tongue hanging out stealing home to his den.
- 4 Lord Hampton he plighted and he cursed and he swore,
That his hounds they had run forty miles, aye, and more.
Bold Rennie's run hard but he surlie must die.
Hark forward, to Towler Dick Dawson did cry.
- 5 Our hounds and our horses, they all are as good
Aye, as ever broke cover or dashed in a wood.
Bold Rennie's run hard but he's given up the chase,
We'll have something to drink when we come to Flask Inn.

(The chorus, in italics, comes after each verse).

The title's amatory associations – usually human rather than vulpine – were not lost on the singer as can be heard in the obvious enjoyment he had from singing the song. Here, however, celebration of the hunt as a way of life is largely absent and as a narrative the song falls short of describing a good day's hunting. It does not include, as does another of Jack Beeforth's hunting songs, 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt', references to local landmarks as the hunt winds its way through a well-known terrain, holding fast the interest of a local audience.

The song starts with a verse which is obscure and seems garbled, as though Jack had either learned the song incorrectly or was having difficulty recalling it. He was probably not conscious of his use of classical allusion as a literary device. Few examples of it appear in his corpus. In his singing of the first line '... when bright Phoebe shone clear' he may have mistaken Phoebe, the Greek moon-goddess, for her brother Phoebus, the sun god, or have intentionally emphasised that the hunt started early in the morning before sun-up, or he may have been unaware of the reference at all.

We assume that it is the singer and his horse, Black's Loving, that had '... not been hunting for more than one year' and the mount seems to have been blamed, on these grounds, for unseating his rider, since it was the road (or perhaps 'roan') that 'let' him fall (though 'Black's Loving' is an inappropriate name for a roan). In common with many hunting songs characters are featured, presumably well known to both singer and listeners, whose identities can be, and are, changed as the song travels between localities. Similar songs to 'Last Valentine's Day' have been widely noted, for example from Hampshire ('The Cattistock Hunting Song'),¹ and from south Yorkshire ('In Ollerton Town').² The participants of gentility in these two versions, Lord Manvers and Squire Farquharson, become Jack Beeforth's Lord Hampton; the yeoman/artisan Tim Boker transforms into Jack's Dick Dawson.

¹ Frank Purslow, *FMJ*, 1:3 (1967), 151.

² Roy Palmer, *Room for Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 66.

The popularity of ‘Last Valentine’s Day’ would have come through the audience’s opportunity to participate in the chorus. Jack Beeforth’s two-line chorus contains, dramatically speaking, no fewer than three invitations to sing: there are sustained notes on ‘Tally-ho’, ‘forward’ and ‘tally-ho’ again. The commentaries on the two similar songs noted above (q.v.) claim that ‘[it] was printed on ballad sheets; copies survive in the British Museum collection’, and that ‘it was usual for singers of this song to put in names from their own locality’. Jack Beeforth duly rounds off his song by slipping in the name of his local pub, the (non-rhyming) Flask Inn, from where he started this particular hunt and at which he finished.

As we have seen, Jack Beeforth was a speaker of strong local dialect forms, but in this song we hear, as in ‘Sweet Dundee’, substantial modification of this accent, whilst we are left with little doubt of the dialectal geography: the short /u/ (1.2 ‘hunting’), the reflexive /r/ (1.2 ‘for’, ‘more’, ‘year’); the frequent dropping of the initial /h/ (1.2 ‘ad’, ‘unting’). The local accent and some dialectal colour shows through most clearly in 3.2:

(so = standard orthography jb = Jack Beeforth)

so – Made a bolt at a ditch when t’old mare tumbled in

jb – Meead a bowlt at a ditch when t’aud meear tumbled in

in which line we have the only example in this song of the locally common abbreviation of the definite article, together with a rich display of the locality’s diphthongs (meead, bowlt, meear) and the pure vowels (at, ditch, tumbled, in). The intrusive initial /h/ where none appears in Standard English was a frequent actor in Jack’s ‘Sweet Dundee’ where it was used emphatically or ironically, but here it appears only twice (2.2 ‘ha fox’ and 5.1 ‘hour horses’), probably by mistake rather than through dramatic intent. This singer is a frequent user of the archaic past tense ending ‘èd’, twice used for scansion in ‘Sweet Dundee’, and here it appears twice again: 2.3 ‘crackèd’ and 3.3 ‘spièd’ – in exactly the same place in the verse. He

is apparently attached to this figure which eliminates the use of melismatic wordsetting in these passages.

The text of 'Last Valentine's Day' is enriched here by Jack Beeforth's selective use of the interjections 'aye' and 'oh', expressing emphasis and affirmation in the associated textual passage:

3.3 'Aye, and as he was a-creeping ...'

4. 2 '... forty miles, aye, and more.'

1.2 'Oh, we had not been hunting ...'

and imparting a realism and another layer of authenticity to the narrative. The first person beginning and ending to the song tells us that Jack had taken part in this hunt and that he had been witness to all the events in it.

Two unusual examples (for Jack Beeforth) of pronunciation outside the usual local dialect forms are heard in this song. In the first, 1.4, 'I heard thee horn sound and thee huntsman did call', gives a stress to the definite articles in the line, which are so pronounced to separate the adjacent words thus avoiding uncomfortable elision between article and noun, when Jack chose to drop the noun's initial aitches. The second of Jack's abnormal pronunciations appears in 1.3 – 'surelie' for the normal 'surely', probably a survival from the music hall (and creating an internal rhyme with 'die'). Revival singers in the 1960s seemed particularly fond of this form which was applied to many words with the 'ly' ending (for example, 'lovelie', 'fondlie', 'boldlie'). Perhaps its most famous manifestation has occurred in the shanty 'What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor?', in which the 'earlie in the morning' closure of both verse and chorus has become established as the standard, not the deviant, version.³

It is clear from this recording that Jack Beeforth's respiratory condition was poor, but although he had difficulty in singing he was never distressed and the initiatives during the

³ John Goss (ed.), *Daily Express Community Song Book* (London: Express Newspapers, 1927), 187.

recordings always lay with him. He appeared to be attempting to take one line of this song with each breath except where his phrasing asked for modification to this pattern:

3.3 (breathing = /) 'Aye, and as he was a-creeping / he spièd bold Ren', and

4.3 'Bold Rennie's run hard / but he surelie must die'.

Other breathing during a line is often infelicitous, for example:

4.2 'That his hounds they had run forty / miles, aye, and more', and

5.3 'Aye, as ever broke cover or dashed in a / wood'.

Jack's handling of the chorus is inconsistent so that there is an unique breathing pattern for each of its five occurrences, for it is a chorus whose three separate phrases require good control of the lungs on which they are making great demands. The singer, perhaps, is reflecting on times past when he would have been able to give each phrase in a single controlled breath, but here he lacks that physical capacity. The basic rhythm – anacrusis with dactylic tetrameter – of the song's $\frac{3}{4}$ time structure is meant to reflect the rhythms of riding to hounds, and we may accept that the slow pace at which it is taken also reflects that which is agreeable to a man now 83. The pace shows a gradual slackening during the song, but the temporal values of the verses (27 seconds for verse 1 and 30 seconds for verse 5) displays the singer's concentration and control throughout the song's passage, despite the distraction of the sustained phases in the chorus.

It is at the interface between verse and chorus that the singer is heard to assert a tightened control over the singing, as he runs the verse's last line into the chorus with hardly time to breathe; the imagined assemblies of chorus singers are being warned that their contribution starts here, and that the singer is still in charge of the proceedings.

The free use of rubato which unaccompanied singing stimulates, is nowhere in this song more clearly displayed than in the chorus's three separate elements. Although inherently conforming to the $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm, each of these elements could be (and probably were in

communal performance) sustained for as long as the singer believed the audience to be enjoying the experience. The rhythmic structure is broken up, too, when Jack decides to prolong other words throughout the song, and in particular the first word of every verse's line 3, which he may have wanted to punctuate at the start of the second rhyming couplet; and overlaying the whole song is a marked syllabic staccato.

As he did in 'Sweet Dundee', Jack Beeforth here uses ornamentation modestly. In 1.2 'made' is sung as an accented upward glide from F# to A, stressing the local use of the diphthong, but this does not appear again during the song. A falling glide is heard on 'Bold' in 4.3 and 5.3 to accentuate the pathos surrounding the fate of the soon-to-die fox. One more gliding figure is heard in verse 5 chorus's 'forward', where the falling major sixth after the climactic D announces the last phrase of the song and the end of the hunt. Some singers (Joseph Taylor, as has been noted, is one), having identified an opportunity for ornamentation in a song, maximise the use of the same figure at the appropriate place throughout the piece. Jack Beeforth is not typically heard to do this, but, unusually, in 'Last Valentine's Day' he attacks the 'with' in each chorus's second phrase with a half-stifled yelp, as though exhorting hunt and chorus.

Despite his age and failing health, Jack is in firm control over the performance's dynamics; note, for example, the intensity with which he delivers the plosive /t/ in each chorus's first word 'Tally-ho', and the restraint shown in the climactic D in each verse's line 3, compared with the power of the same note in the 'for-ward' in each chorus. Percy Grainger questioned whether 'this disinclination on the part of folksingers, to use their full vocal strength (except for sudden short accents) [could] be one of the reasons why they so often preserve the freshness and true intonation of their voices up to such great ages?'⁴

A preamble from the singer for the performance of this song was lacking; those present at this recording were taken by surprise when he started, for their mumbled conversation mars

⁴ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 160.

the first line of the song. This confidence in remembering the words and selecting a singable key is typical of Jack Beeforth, though this pitch stretches the upper limit of his current capability – shown in the fragility in the leap of a fourth in 1.1 ‘loving’. All subsequent Ds are achieved with musical integrity largely intact; moreover, Jack is able to infuse the second syllable of ‘forward’ in each chorus with a pleasing vibrato. Vibrato is used throughout the piece, not only on sustained notes but on passages like 2.3, ‘it being a signal he crackèd his whip’. It is impossible to judge how Jack’s senescence has affected his voice timbre; what we hear is a resonant baritone in his mid-range which contrasts with the shaking tenor flourished by Joseph Taylor, and the thinner and reedier tenors of Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe.

The wordsetting in ‘Last Valentine’s Day’ is almost entirely syllabic, with melisma avoided through the insertion of an additional word or figure as shown earlier. The first part of the chorus ‘Tally-ho – o – o – o – o’ has each of the four rising ‘o’s articulated as separate syllables, though they would be easier, perhaps, to sing legato. In this the singer is merely continuing with the staccato form of the rest of the song, for he is, after all, imagining himself at a hunt, an old man riding to a slow jog.

III: Joseph Taylor: 'The White Hare'⁵

$\text{♩} = 80$

Near Old-ham town near Old-ham town as I have hear-ed them tell There
 once was a white hare that used there for to dwell. She - 'd been
 hunt - ed by bea - gles and grey - hounds so fair But
 ne'er a onc a - mongst them could come near this old white hare. With me
 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$
 ri - tol - the - di - ddle - ol, the - ri - tol - the day.

- 1 Near Oldham town. near Oldham town as I have heard them tell:
 There once was a white hare that used there for to dwell;
 She'd been hunted by beagles and greyhounds so fair,
 But ne'er a one amongst them could come near this old white hare,

With me ri-tol-the-didel-ol, the-ri-tol-the-day.

- 2 They went to the place where the white hare used to lie;
 They uncoupled their beagles aden beginning for to try,
 They uncoupled their beagles and they beat the bushes round,
 But there was never a white hare not there to be found.
- 3 There was Jim Smith the huntsman and Tom the whipper-in;
 Go done to yonder furze-side to see if she'd be in;
 With that she took a jump me boys, and away she did run,
 And yonder she is going, don't you see her, gentlemen.
- 4 The footmen they did run and the horsemen they did ride;
 Such holloa-ing and shouting there was on every side,
 Such holloa-ing and shouting I never before had known
 And all the men kept crying, 'Tally O, tally O.'

⁵ Joseph Taylor, *Unto Brigg Fair*. This tune is Grainger's 1908 recording and the transcription is the writer's.

- 5 There was twenty good beagles that caused her to die,
There was not one amongst them above a foot high;
The number of the dogs there, never could be found
And never better hunting upon old English ground.

(The chorus, in italics, comes after each verse).

Version from '*Traditional Tunes*'⁶

- 1 Near Howden town, near Howden town, as I have heard them tell,
There once was a white hare who used there to dwell;
She's been hunted by greyhounds and beagles so fair,
But ne'er a one amongst them could come near this white hare.

With my fol de dol de rol de dol de lol de dol de lay!

- 2 When they came to the place where this white hare used to lie,
They uncoupled the beagles and began for to try;
They uncoupled the beagles and beat the brush around,
But never a white hare in that field was to be found.

- 3 It's Jemmy the huntsman and Tom the whipper-in,
Go look in yonder fernside and see if she be in;
With that she took a jump, boys, and fast away she ran,
"It's yonder she is going, don't you see her, gentlemen?"

- 4 The footmen they did run and the huntsmen they did ride,
Such halloing and shouting there was on every side;
Such halloing and shouting I ne'er before did know,
As though she had been running all the time through.

- 5 The horsemen and the footmen they all drew nigh,
Thinking that the white hare was going for to die;
She slipt out of the bush and thought to run away,
But cruel were the beagles that caused her to stay.

- 6 'Twas twenty good beagles that caused her to die,
There was not one amongst them above a foot high;
The number of dogs there's not to be found,
Nor ever better hunting upon the English ground.

Percy Grainger recorded Joseph Taylor's 'The White Hare' on two separate occasions, the first at Brigg, on Sunday 28th July 1906 (two recordings were made), and the second in London during July 1908 (the exact date is uncertain).⁷ At Brigg, Joseph sang only verse two of the song, saying that 'He could remember no other verses', but this did not prevent Grainger featuring the item in 'Collecting with the Phonograph', his article for the *Folk-Song*

⁶ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 139-40.

⁷ R. W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 32.

Society Journal in May 1908. During the intervening two years it seems that Joseph had remembered more of the song: ‘... Mr Taylor has recalled six verses of the song closely resembling the words in ‘*Traditional Tunes*’, and has had a record made of it by the Gramophone Company’.⁸

It is likely that Joseph had been directed towards Frank Kidson’s *Traditional Tunes* version by Percy Grainger himself for his words closely follow those Kidson published, which were, Kidson said, ‘the words I find upon ballad sheets. The first line is either, “Near Maxwell town,” or, “Near Mansfield town,” but the Howden people always gave the name of the place as their own.’ (Frank Kidson’s correspondent, Mr Lolley, obtained the melody of the song from ‘a man near Howden’).⁹ Joseph Taylor does not seem to have ‘recalled’ the song very firmly since a ghosted prompt is heard (from Percy Grainger?) at the beginning of each verse and during verse four. The text for the *Traditional Tunes* version has been set out below the Taylor text to show the similarity between the two.

Joseph Taylor was a countryman and whether or not he had ever taken part in a hunting of a hare, he would have been familiar enough with the associated activities and conventions to have believed he had the right to sing about it. The assonance in ‘Howden’ and ‘Oldham’, an initial clipped aitch in Howden and Joseph’s pronunciation of old = owd (hear 1.4), suggests that the source of his version was indeed *Traditional Tunes*, and that he probably learned the song aurally. The hearing of ‘Oldham’ rather than ‘Howden’ is curious since Howden, just north of Goole, is no more than twenty kilometres from Joseph’s Saxby-All-Saints, almost within his purview and if the place of action had been retained, the song may have held another layer of meaning for him. Although it is not sung in strong dialect, ‘The White Hare’ is coloured by some strong features of local accenting, for example:

1.2 ‘There once was a white ’are that yeeused theer for to dwell’

⁸ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’. 190.

⁹ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 139.

- 2.1 'They went to the place wheer the white 'are yeeused to lie'
- 2.2 'They uncouplèd their beagles and they bate the bushes round'
- 2.3 'But theer was niver a white 'are not theer to be found'.

Percy Grainger seemed pleased to hear this local flavouring and would have been disappointed if his 'peasants' had not shown their colourful speechways in their songs: 'many of the songs that I have heard in Lincolnshire would...suffer...if deprived of the local pronunciation and added syllables, as would broad Scotch songs subjected to similar treatment'.¹⁰ Grainger was rewarded then by the short /u/, the dropped aitch, the reflexive /r/ heard throughout this song, and by the three appearances of the accented 'èd' ending in

2.2 & 2.3 'uncouplèd' and

5.1 'causèd'

and by the separated three syllables in

4.2 '... on ev-er-y side'.

A single use of an added meaningless syllable (seen once in 'Gipsy's Wedding Day') occurs in

2.2 '... aden (and) beginning for to try'.

Jack Beeforth does not add extra syllables to words to avoid melisma, but as shown in 'Last Valentine's Day' he also is a frequent user of the 'èd' form and interjective expressions such as 'oh' and 'aye' to secure his desired scansion and wordsetting. It was as if Grainger's Lincolnshire singers 'felt an urge to break down melisma into more straightforward syllabic form yet would not do so at the cost of destroying the curvature of the melodies, so they invented or inserted textual additives'.¹¹

The narrative coherence of this piece is blighted by the idea that Percy Grainger is directing not only the technical aspects of the recording, but is feeding verse by verse a text

¹⁰ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 161.

¹¹ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

barely known to the singer; indistinct speech can be heard before each verse and there is a clear prompt after 4.3. It is to Joseph Taylor's credit that he nevertheless delivers a credible account of a hunt, and that it does not wholly sound as though he is linking together five disconnected stanzas. In verses two and three in particular, Joseph's rich use of local speech forms, figures of metrical control and his personalising of the account ('Tom and Jim Smith are names that occur with great frequency through successive generations of huntsmen in the employ of the [local] Earl of Yarborough')¹² give an authority to his performance.

The notation of 'The White Hare' (the 1906 version) is set out by Percy Grainger in the key of D,¹³ but since no sharpened Fs or Cs are heard, the tune may be described as being in the Dorian mode. Grainger characterises the song as being taken 'With much swing, and even tone' at MM dotted crotchet = about 88. The swing in this case would not sit well with excessive rubato and certainly there is little here, a slight pause for example at the end of 2.1 & 2.2 'lie' and 'try' and an almost lost pressing of the rhythm in each chorus's 'the-didel-ol'.

A remarkable similarity in Joseph Taylor's control of breathing is heard between 'Gipsy's Wedding Day' and 'The White Hare'. In each of these two songs Joseph separates lines one and two by a breath at the end of each line of the first couplet, then runs together the two lines of the second couplet to help the story along. In this song, however, the singer attempts to take the flow into the chorus where it ends abruptly after the chorus's first word 'With', but the faint quick breath forced here does not deeply mar the performance, as does Jack Beeforth's inappropriate breathing in 'Last Valentine's Day', there caused by incapacity not choice.

Previously we have seen how Percy Grainger attributed the long preservation of folksingers' voices to their disinclination to overwork their full vocal strength. Here the 75 year old Joseph Taylor accommodates the song's seventh leaps with controlled power and

¹² Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

¹³ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 189.

amplitude. It is, though, not possible, because of the crude recording techniques then available, to hear whether the singer throughout the song keeps within the half-loud, half-soft corridor which Grainger would have expected. Any deficiencies in the recording of a century ago cannot conceal Joseph's inventiveness in his fashioning and deploying of vocal techniques perhaps unequalled in other English singers in this genre. The distinctive bleating timbre which brings an enriched vocalic texture to the voice's appeal, seems almost to give another layer to the vocal line, as though in accompaniment. The sonority does not seem to be natural, but acquired and developed, and modelled perhaps on some admired vernacular singer in his past, or influenced by the liturgical and ceremonial practices demanded by his membership of the village church choir, or again picked up from some professional singer in a Christmas oratorio in the village.

Artifice in Joseph's singing style is displayed in 1.1 where a clear determination by the singer embellishes the F-E-F sequence in 'Tow-n as' as a lower mordent, which he skilfully accomplishes by giving the oscillating expression added aspiration with rapid glottal vibration. This figure is repeated in 1.2 on 'ha-re that'.



In 2.1, the opening 'Th-e-y went', Joseph fashions a sliding rising figure with strong vibrato, echoed in the phrasing in each of the two subsequent lines before the octave plunge.



Although Joseph Taylor complained to Percy Grainger that singing into the recording trumpet of the primitive Edison-Bell phonograph was ‘like singing with a muzzle on’,¹⁴ we hear in this recording, with Grainger, that Joseph Taylor’s twiddles and arabesques and ornamented bleatings are ‘not merely the quaverings of old and shaky voices, but are introduced, like other ornaments, to give point and flourish’.¹⁵

¹⁴ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 147.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

IV: Walter Pardon: 'The Huntsman'¹⁶

$\text{♩} = 50$



The sun had just peeped its head — o'er the hills, The plough - boy whis - tling
cross the fields, The birds are a - sing - ing so sweet on each spray, Said the
hunts - man to his hounds, Tall - y - ho, Hark a - way. Tall - y - ho, hark a - way Tall - y -
ho, Hark a - way, Tall - y - ho, Tall - y - ho, Tall - y - ho, Hark a - way.

- 1 The sun had just peeped its head o'er the hills,
The ploughboys whistling 'cross the fields,
The birds are a-singing so sweet on each spray,
Said the Huntsman to his hounds, "Tally-ho, hark away".

*Tally-ho, hark away, Tally-ho, hark away
Tally-ho, Tally-ho, Tally-ho, hark away.*

- 2 Come my brave sportsmen, come, make no delay
Quick, saddle your horses and let's brush away
For the fox is in view and he's kindled with scorn
Come my brave sportsmen, come, join the shrill horn.
- 3 He led us a chase for sixteen long miles
Over hedges, over ditches, over gates and over stiles.
The Huntsman came up with his musical horn,
We shall soon overtake him, for his brush drags along.
- 4 He led us a chase, six hours in full cry
Tally-ho, hark away, now, soon he must die.
We will cut off his brush with a hallowing noise
And we'll drink a good success to all fox-hunting boys.

¹⁶ Walter Pardon, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*.

This is Walter Pardon's only song about sport. Its possible role and function in his life is not clear, because he is not known to have hunted or to be affiliated to those who did, but being a countryman, he would have considered such a song to be a commonplace thread in the fabric of his rural life. Fox-hunting's place in the rural milieu survived, according to Roy Palmer, 'because the animal is wild, because it involved no large crowds, gambling, disorder or damage, because it was rural rather than urban, and above all, although it had a working class following, it was organised by and for country gentlemen and prosperous farmers'.¹⁷

This song contains no references to Walter Pardon's locality; its setting is a landscape of stereotypical design and literary convention, and the account of the hunt is cursory. That it could have been written from the imagination from someone who had not actually seen a hunt should not surprise or disappoint: that is the nature of many hunting songs. One phrase, however, seems to stand apart from the rest of the hackneyed account: 2.3 '... and he's kindled with scorn', where 'kindled' and 'scorn' meet the anthropomorphic expectations of the hunters, who would want their quarry to be inflamed with contempt for its pursuers, and therefore a worthy adversary, rather than be merely frightened. The phrase is a memorable one; it would have been helpful to singers who built their repertoires largely by aural means. Walter Pardon and the rest learned their songs by listening to others and another possible interpretation of the phrase emerges.

In this alternative gloss, the verb 'kindle' carries the alternative meaning 'to bring forth young' or as a noun 'brood litter',¹⁸ and 'scorn' perhaps a mis-hearing of the southern English pronunciation of gone = gorn, met elsewhere in the vernacular idiom, for example, in a version of 'The Bitter Withy';¹⁹ there the otherwise meaningless line: 'It was upling scorn and downling scorn' may also be heard as 'It was up 'ill 'e's gorn and down 'ill 'e's gorn'. In an alternative explanation, then, the fox has not haughtily

¹⁷ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 189.

¹⁸ *Chambers Dictionary*, 922.

¹⁹ Francis B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* [1907](New York: Dover, repr. 1959), 228.

challenged the hunt to a contest but less heroically has left its cubs and run off – has gone.

In another hunting song, ‘The Hunting of Arscott of Tetcott’, ‘Scorn’ is the name of one of the hounds, a convenient rhyme for the song’s ‘morn, horn, thorn’.²⁰

‘The Huntsman’ is not densely impregnated with East Anglian dialect usage or accent colouring, but as in Walter’s ‘Sweet Dundee’ it contains enough Norfolk vowel flavouring to leave little doubt as to the singer’s locale, for example:

1.2 ploughboy = ploweboy 2.3 view = voo 3.3 musical = moosical.

The different wordsetting strategies which the first two of our featured singers used – Jack Beeforth – interjective expressions, word elongation; Joseph Taylor – meaningless additives, word elongation – do not often appear in Walter Pardon’s singing. In ‘The Huntsman’ the prefix ‘a-’ in 1.3: ‘The birds are a-singing so sweet on each spray’ is exceptional for this singer who prefers to use variation in stress and rhythm to avoid melismatic elements.

The idiosyncratic nature of Walter’s accenting is seen from the differences in the prosody as it appears on the page, outside the musical setting, and the piece as it is sung. The text appears to be based on a dactylic / _ - - / form, its rhythmic undulations sympathetic within a song featuring the riding of horses and suitable for 6/8 time. It could have been rendered thus (/ = division of metric foot):

The / sun had just / peep-ed its / head o’er the / hills
The / ploughboys whist / ling ’cross the / fields
The / birds are a-/ singing so / sweet on each / spray
Said the / Huntsman to his / hounds Tally-/ ho hark a / way

However, the singer’s moulding of words and melody produces a distinctive setting, free from much of the implied metric constraint of the above dactylic tetrameter:

²⁰ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, 5.

The / sun had just / peeped its / head o'er the / hills
 The / ploughboys / whistling / 'cross the / fields
 The / birds are a-/ singing so / sweet on each / spray
 Said_ the / Huntsman to his / hounds Tally-/ ho hark a / way

The first two lines are of indeterminate scansion; moreover, line two lacks a foot of metre altogether, compared to the other three stanzas. By line three, the song has assumed a more regular rhythmic complexion which, although broadly sustained to the song's end, is enriched now here, now there, with shifts in accenting and tempo, sometimes stretching, sometimes compressing the song's pace, for example:

3.2 'Over / hedges, over / ditches, over / gates and over / stiles'

and

4.4 'And we'll / drink a good succ / ess to all / fox-hunting / boys'.

Walter Pardon's singing of this song is not produced, rhythmically, as the portrayal of an actual hunt (as Jack Beeforth's seemed to be) but as an account of the particulars of a hunting day, attenuated though the song's storyline may be. Jack, we may be reminded, had been a huntsman. Walter had not.

Breathing at the end of each line, and in the chorus at the end of each of the three 'hark away' phrases, the singer maintains a regular breath pattern that does not allow enjambment between lines, where textual run-on may have continued the sense from one line to the next, as in (breathing = /):

2.2 Quick, saddle your horses and let's brush away/

2.3 For the fox is in view and he's kindled with scorn

Walter seems to have no liking for dramatic devices, accomplishing his desired phrasing chiefly through variations in stress and rhythm and pace. James Fenton demands emotional

restraint from singers, some of whom, he says, are under the illusion that for a line of poetry to be delivered in song, ‘every word must be tinged with emotion that is – subtly or not so subtly – different from the previous word, and from the word to come’. Here he writes about lieder, but he reminds the reader that in that genre, the ‘poem is, typically a rather simple thing, often a derivative of folk song ... the work of great writers working in the simplest mode’, and he condemns the vices of singers who indulge in ‘these sudden hushings of the voice, these evocations of shock on one syllable, awe on the next, these excessive variations’.²¹

The rare use here of variation in emotional input reflects Walter’s aversion to theatricality also, for in this piece only faintly does he depart from his restrained delivery, subtly increasing the intensity of the dynamics, and introducing some modest ornamentation in the choruses, for example line 2 verse 1 chorus:

Tally-ho, Tally-ho, Tally-ho, hark away

where expressive slides are heard in the ‘Tally-ho’ figures suggesting some abandonment, but (this being Walter Pardon), reined-in.

For James Fenton, simple words ‘do not need, and will not bear, excessive interpretation’; misplaced drama could be replaced by ‘the expression of a sustained and convincing emotion’²² as the only, and sufficient goal. In this, Walter Pardon’s performance of ‘The Huntsman’ would find his approval. It is sung with sincerity, as though Walter had lived within the actuality, the routines and the mores of the chase, which, in reality he had not. Resonances of authenticity heard in a Walter Pardon performance may have much to do with his work of crafting and refining his songs during the years when he sang to no one but himself, when he moulded the words and tunes so that they seemed, to him, just right. ‘Phrasing, as it applies to text and tune is so apt that no-one could doubt that [Walter] has

²¹ James Fenton, ‘On wings of song’, *The Guardian*, 12 April 2003.

²² Ibid.

spent incalculable time easing himself into the coat of each song ... the diction in ... The Huntsman ... the rhythm and the pace are all nudged this way or that, subsumed to narrative demands'.²³

²³ Roly Brown, 'Put a Bit of Powder on it – Father MTCD305-6'. Review in *Musical Traditions Online* <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/reviews/pardon.htm> [accessed 28.04.03].

V: Frank Hinchliffe: 'While Forging of My Scales and Springs'²⁴

$\text{♩} = 100$

While forg - ing of my scales and springs and blow - ing up my bell - ows. An -

oth - er line or two I've penned a - bout my shop - mate Joe Ell - is. In

mak - ing flights and fish - ing tools things all as goes int' Darr - en. But

I'll nimb - ly tread it o'er yon moss till I comes to t' riv - er Darr - en.

Fal - de - dal fal - de - dal fal - dal - de - did - dle - dal - de - di - do. I'll

nimb - ly trip it o'er yon moss till I comes to t' riv - er Darr - en.

- 1 While forgin' of me scales an' springs an' blowin' up me bellus.
Another line or two I'll penned about my shopmate Joe Ellis.
In mekin' flights an' fishin' tools, thin's all as goes int' Darren,
But I'll nimbly trip it o'er yon moss till I comes to t' river Darren.

Fal-de-dal fal-de-dal fal-dal-de-diddle-dal-de-dido!

I'll nimbly trip it o'er yon moss till I comes to t' river Darren.

- 2 The morning fine, slaps in me line, as e'er the fish are grayling,
For soon I catch one by the snout, see 'ow 'e comes a-sailin'.
All hold me all, thou must be sold, for me thou seems so clever,
But if this line should chance to break thou may be lost for ever.

Fal-de-dal fal-de-dal fal-dal-de-diddle-dal-de-dido!

But if this line should chance to break thou may be lost for ever.

²⁴ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, Hin 63.

- 3 Another isle or two I'll try although I see I'm slighted,
An' then I must be joggin' 'ome or else I'll be benighted;
And when that Joe 'e does get 'ome unto 'is recreation,
The neighbours they'll come flockin' in, the fish begin a-buyin'.
They'll take 'em 'ome to gut and wash and then begin a-fryin'.

Fal-de-dal fal-de-dal fal-dal-de-diddle-dal-de-dido!
They'll take 'em 'ome to gut and wash and then begin a-fryin'.

- 4 Some people they a-fishin' go know little of the matter.
They'll toil an' spend their time in vain in floggin' of the water.
They'll long an' wish all to catch fish an' merely they will watch 'em.
They'll bait 'em wi' a silver 'ook but it's a workman that can catch 'em.

Fal-de-dal fal-de-dal fal-dal-de-diddle-dal-de-dido!
They'll bait 'em wi' a silver 'ook but it's a workman that can catch 'em.

Although the corpus of English and Scottish vernacular song contains many references to fishing, they are overwhelmingly concerned not with fishing or angling as an individual, sometimes solitary, activity but as a larger-scale maritime commercial enterprise, for example 'The Bonny Ship the Diamond', 'Greenland Bound', 'Farewell to Tarwathie'.²⁵ 'While Forging of My Scales and Springs' is therefore unusual, and it is reviewed here notwithstanding the imperfect quality of the sound reproduction, because it represents Frank Hinchliffe's only complete item typologically and thematically comparable with the three against which it is set.

The text is difficult to follow. It is imbued with rich dialectal sonority; it contains metrical irregularities and differences in stressing; its narrative confuses by capriciously alternating between the first person author and third person angler, recounted in the present tense, though inconsistently so. The song's title may immediately conjure images of fish scales and spring-balances upon which the catch is weighed, but the references here are to the cutlery industry, which once employed thousands of workers in Frank Hinchliffe's Sheffield area, including the two workmates who are featured.

²⁵ Peggy Seeger & Ewan MacColl, *The Singing Island*, 56-63.

In this industry, the division of manufacture into a large series of simple processes was an early development, each operative often handling the product several times during the course of its manufacture, but nevertheless having only a partial and disconnected input into the finished article. The manufacture of Rodger's pen-knives in the nineteenth century is an example:

Let's just reckon hah menna toimes one part or anuther on 'em goos throo us
hands ... we'll begin wi' t' blade makker furst:

Blade Makker..... 4 toimes

Scale and Spring Makker..... 4 toimes

Groinder..... 8 toimes

Cutler or Setter in.....22 toimes

Total 38

Besoides a menna mooar little jobs sitch as wettin and woipin &c.²⁶

The song's angler, Joe Ellis, alienated by the disjointed production processes from pride in craftsmanship, finds some compensation, it seems, by using his employer's time and resources in 1.3 'mekin' flights and fishin' tools' which he later uses to fish in the river Darren (probably the river Derwent which runs north to south 15 kilometres west of Sheffield). His seemingly idyllic pastime appears to be in clear contradistinction to the tediously repetitive industrial work patterns of his job in the cutlery trade. This sport, however, is shown by the author in reality to have a commercial dimension, for the fish are sold and Joe's 'recreation' (3.3) begins only when fishing has ended – is Joe being teased here as being an angler so successful that neighbours 'come flocking in' to buy his catch? Verse four reflects the self-congratulatory sentiments already seen in the three hunting songs; in this case the workman (even using self-made tackle) can triumph over the non-workman (personified by the 'silver hook'), and the fish itself.

The four stanzas of the song are delivered freely, heavily disguising the iambic heptameter which is seen from reading the text and which was also heard in 'Sweet Dundee' (though 'While Forging of My Scales and Springs' has an added syllable at each line end). In

²⁶ Abel Bywater, *The Sheffield Dialect* (Wakefield: Nicholson, 1877), 53-4.

the first line of the two-line chorus the ‘fal-de-dal’ theme further breaks up the song’s rhythm, after which there is a return to the heptametric structure for the chorus’s second line, a repeat of line four. Unencumbered by the disciplines sometimes imposed by musical accompaniment, vernacular singers like Frank Hinchliffe are able to stretch or compress the needs of a textual passage by rhythmic or melodic modification, an example of which is heard here in 1.2: ‘Another line or two I’ll penned (sic) about my shopmate Joe Ellis’ where the added ‘shop’ is accommodated by a change in rhythm. This does not, however, cause unease in the listener.

In ‘I’ll penned’, the use of an implied future tense auxiliary verb with a past participle is a construction not usually featured in local dialect speech in the Sheffield area and may be merely a mispronunciation. A complete line of additional text appears in 3.4: ‘The neighbours they’ll come flocking in, the fish begin a-buyin’’, in which the aabb rhyming pattern of the stanzas is interrupted by this line which has no rhyming echo. This verse three may be a conflation of two verses which Frank has either forgotten or which he learned incorrectly. Seeming to support this latter view, 2.3 contains three apparently disconnected phrases which may be some phonetic but incoherent representation of words never truly understood by the singer: ‘All hold me all, thou must be sold, for me thou seems so clever.’

The use, in 3.2, of ‘benighted’ which in modern usage has been given a metaphorical sense of being lost in intellectual or moral darkness, is here used in its older, literal sense of being overtaken by night, as Joe gives some urgency to his last attempts at getting a catch before nightfall. In this stanza, a further suggestion that Frank does not truly understand the meaning of the words of the song is heard:

3.1: ‘Another isle or two I’ll ...’ which phonetically almost replicates

1.2: ‘Another line or two I’ll ...’

Although the listener may have some doubts as to the text and meaning of some individual passages in this song, the singer displays confidence throughout and is at ease with the general flow of the sometimes opaque narrative. This song is in the form of a quatrain (verse 3 is an exception) composed of two joined rhyming couplets with a two line chorus, the second line of which is a repeat of the verse's line four; verse three is a five-line aberration. The song's type, with its non-rhythmic themes and content does not demand a driving beat as did the two fox-hunting songs discussed earlier but a freer and more contemplative delivery. The aural self-containment of each rhyming couplet allows the singer to linger and not to be propelled onward by his own, and the audience's, expectation of an approaching rhyme.

Frank Hinchliffe's apparent low levels of vocal power and amplitude gives him control over his breathing and phrasing, a control unavailable to a more 'breathy' singer such as Jack Beeforth (though we are hearing the latter in his physically declining years). Thus the two lines of the chorus – except in verse one – are run together and sung in one breath; the 'fal-de-dals', the change of rhythm and pace and the repeated last line of each verse sharpening interest and giving listeners opportunity to ponder on the previous verse. A delicate rubato garnishes this last line, and the last line in every succeeding verse where a breathing punctuation (= /) separates and intensifies the two phrases, for example in 2.6:

'But if this line should chance to break / thou may be lost forever'.

The imperfect recording here hinders analysis of the nature of voice timbre and singer articulation, yet it is clear that there is a fragility in the performance, with the singer often at the margins of a soft crooning falsetto, giving the piece a gentleness that the textual content does not seem to merit, for example 4.4:

'They'll bait 'em wi' a silver 'ook but it's a workman that can catch 'em.'

The wordsetting throughout the song is syllabic with the prefix /a-/ recruited to avoid melisma in, for example:

2.2: ‘... see ’ow ‘e comes a-sailing’.

It has previously been noted that Frank Hinchliffe’s use of ornamentation is minimal, and largely confined to weak anticipatory leaps which are heard in this song, for example, in 1.3, ‘I’ll’ and slides, for example, in 1.4, ‘river’. The musical line sung by Frank Hinchliffe contrasts sharply with that carried by Joseph Taylor, the one delivered with a bare, restrained and unadorned tonality often bordering on falsetto, the other with full vibrato, embellishment of melody and power throughout the vocal range. Joseph Taylor it has been observed, had been a long-established member of his church choir; fifty kilometres to the south west, Frank Hinchliffe had been involved with the Sheffield annual tradition of pub carol-singing during the weeks before Christmas, and he knew more than 40 local carols.²⁷ However, the two separate, though in some ways similar, experiences of these two singers had done nothing to develop in them similar styles of vocalisation. The source of the abundance of texture and ornamentation in the one voice and the frugality in the other may lie in the different innate vocal characteristics of these two men, and in the vernacular singers they had met, admired and sought to copy. Influences, too, may have sprung from the different choral traditions which these men inhabited: Joseph from a rurally based Church of England culture, and Frank from a semi-industrial non-conformist tradition.

One intriguing detail remains to be identified in the song ‘While Forging of My Scales and Springs’. After ending the singing of it, Frank Hinchliffe added, ‘Now where’s that from? I know nowt about fishing. I don’t know which end of rod to throw in ... One of me dad’s that. I never heard it sung anywhere else’.²⁸ This observation may account for the singer’s apparent incoherence in parts of the song, where in verses 2 – 4 the music of line 3 is

²⁷ Ian Russell, *FMJ*, 7:1 (1995), 123.

²⁸ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, Hin 63.

replaced by the music for line 2, and the music for line 4 is replaced (partly or wholly) by the version that comes in the chorus. Frank apparently had not internalised the song completely, and his comment above calls into question ideas of meaning, significance and function in this genre of song: that sometimes too much consideration may be given to a search for profound senses of a song's identity and value, its role and effect, when in truth a singer may simply be silently implying to an audience, 'You want me to sing? I've learned this song. I like it and I think you may like it too. Let me sing it for you'.

11

HOW FOUR MEN SING: A SONG OF WORK

I: Introduction

This section sets out and compares the performance of the four featured men, three of them singing ‘All Jolly Fellows who Follow the Plough’, which is categorised here as a song about work, that is, which describes the rituals, relationships and confrontations during tasks or work. Joseph Taylor did not have this song and ‘Rufford Park Poachers’ is selected as the most appropriate comparative song from his known repertoire.

Table 11.1: Songs of work

singer	song	date recorded	singer's age	recorded By
Jack Beeforth	All Jolly Fellows	22.06.1974	83	David Hillery
Joseph Taylor	Rufford Park Poachers	11.07.1908	75	Percy Grainger
Walter Pardon	All Jolly Fellows	04.07.1988	74	Mike Yates
Frank Hinchliffe	All Jolly Fellows	03.07.1976	53	Mike Yates

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould believed the song ‘All Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough’, to be:

very generally known. We have picked up four variants of the tune. Miss [Lucy] Broadwood gives one from Oxfordshire and one from Hampshire, but hers lack the chorus. Mr C. Sharp has also gathered three. He says: “I find that almost every singer knows it, the bad singers often know but little else. Perhaps it is for this reason that the tune is very corrupt, the words are almost always the same.”¹

Its ubiquity may have been notable during the period of Sharp’s folk song collecting in England (between 1903 and 1924), but the song has not maintained a tenacious hold on the memories of the four singers we are discussing here. Three of our singers have recorded only incomplete versions of ‘All Jolly Fellows’, while Joseph Taylor did not offer the song at all. Nevertheless, this song is selected for discussion here and for compelling reasons. It is one of the few pieces in their repertoires which cross over between most of our singers (Joseph Taylor has recorded an appropriate alternative, and the rationale for its inclusion is discussed later); it is a rare example in these repertoires of a song about work; the texts are set to four different tunes, a condition which exposes some useful and interesting issues; the fragmentary nature of the remembered texts illuminates the singers’ attitudes to some real or imagined structural relationships in their shared agricultural universe. The consideration of an example of a full, recovered text for this song is important in this analysis, for it helps to illustrate which elements of the narrative account the singer has retained and which he has discarded or forgotten. The following full-text version, sung by Arthur Lane (1884-1975), a farm worker from Corvedale in Shropshire runs:

‘All Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough’²

- 1 ‘Twas early one morning at the break of the day.
The cocks were all crowing and the farmer did say,
‘Come, rise, my good fellows, rise with good will,
Your horses want something their bellies to fill!’

¹ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, Notes on the songs, 18.

² Roy Palmer, *Everyman’s Book of English Country Songs*, 20.

- 2 When four o'clock comes, then up we do rise,
 And to our stables so merrily flies;
 With rubbing and scrubbing our horses, I'll vow
 That we're all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

- 3 When six o'clock comes, for breakfast we meet,
 With bread, beef and pud, boys, we heartily eat;
 With a piece in our pocket, I'll swear and I'll vow
 That we're all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

- 4 We harness our horses and away we do go,
 We trip o'er the plains as nimbly as does;
 And when we get there so jolly and bold,
 To see which of us a straight furrow can hold.

- 5 Our master comes to us and this he did say,
 'What have you been doing, boys all this long day?
 If you've not ploughed your acre, I'll swear and I'll vow
 That you're damned idle fellows that follow the plough.'

- 6 I stepped up to him and made this reply:
 'We've all ploughed our acre, so you've told a damn' lie;
 We've all ploughed our acre, I'll swear and I'll vow,
 We're all jolly fellows that follow the plough.'

- 7 He turned himself round and laughed at the joke:
 'It's past two o'clock, boys, it's time to unyoke;
 Unharness your horses and rub them down well,
 And I'll give you a jug of my very best ale.'

- 8 So all you brave fellows whoever you be,
 Come take this advice and be ruled by me:
 Never fear your master then I'll swear and I'll vow
 That you're all jolly fellows that follow the plough.

Of the many questions thrown up by the text of this song, not the least acute is why apparently pragmatic and practical artisans, experiencing a concrete existence in their real world of hard physical labour, should be attracted by this fanciful account of demanding and tediously repetitive chores.

If at first sight it appears that an acre is not much land for a man and a team of horses to plough in a day, one fact may help to correct the view-point; if they were turning a nine-inch furrow - most commonly used in this country - the horses and the ploughman would have walked eleven miles by the time they had completed their stint; and walking, both for the horseman and his charges, was by no means the most arduous part of the business.³

It may be admitted that the song's text does give some regard to the fortitude of the labourer and his endurance in the hard daily grind; his competence in carrying out the different tasks

³ George Ewart Evans, *The Horse in the Furrow*, 41.

associated with the job; his spirit in rebutting his employer's unfair reprimand; his good humour throughout the long day, the horses yet needing to be unharnessed, rubbed down, stabled and fed. The narrative is, however, often given in the first person, and this positioning, while serving to underline the credibility of the song's sentiments, also undermines any idea that the broad-tasking regime of farm labour brings with it some independence and autonomy, for here the farmer is directing the work from beginning to end and is, moreover, apparently able to recover some goodwill after his unwise intervention.

Farm workers who sang this song may have seen in it the emergence of some grudging accord, in which the labourers make their point and are rewarded. A farmer may, on the other hand, have regarded it as the depiction of a firm practice of a range of good management skills with pints of ale a small price to pay for sustaining a good, goal-achieving, work team. In either interpretation the song works around the tensions which persisted between farmer and worker in the agricultural economic order. As one writer has seen it, "All Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough" tells an unequivocal story of control and resistance',⁴ but to posit such a reductionist perspective is to ignore the contradictions manifest in the song:

[some] songs containing images of social life seem to connote meanings and values supportive of the existing order, rather than alternatives or oppositional meanings and values. The very widely sung "We're All Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough", for instance, glorified manual farm labour, skill and physical achievement, but did it perhaps at the same time also facilitate, along with a host of other cultural elements and practices, the insertion of landless labourers into a system of exploitation of the very labour power the song exalts? ... [such songs] displaced attention and promoted misrecognitions ... they created blocks and limitations upon perception and understanding.⁵

⁴ Marek Korczynski, 'Music at Work: Towards a Historical Overview', *FMJ* 8:3 (2003), 318.

⁵ Michael Pickering, 'The Farm Worker and "The Farmer's Boy"', *Lore and Language* 3:9 (1983), 54.

11: Jack Beeforth: 'All Jolly Fellows that Follows the Plough'



- 1 It was early one morn at the break of the day,
The cocks were a-crowing, the farmer did say:
'Come arise, me good fellows and rise wi' good will,
For your horses want something their bellies to fill'.
- 2 And when four o'clock comes, aye, and up we did rise,
And into the stables so merrily fly.
With rubbing and scrubbing our horses, we vow,
And we're all jolly fellows that follows the plough.
- 3 Then when six o'clock comes the table we meet.
We have beef, bacon, pork lads right hearty we eat.
With a piece in 'r pockets I'll swear and I'll vow,
We're all jolly fellows that follows the plough.
- 4 Then we harness our horses and away then we go.
And we trip o'er the plain boys as nimbly as doe.
And when we get there so merry and bold,
To see which of us the straightest furrow can hold
(When the hills and the valleys did sweetly ...)
- 5 Then our master come to us and this he did say:
What have you been doing this dreary long day?
For you ain't ploughed an acre I'll swear and I'll vow,
You're all lazy fellows that follows the plough.
- 6 But I stepped up to him and I made this reply:
We have all ploughed an acre so you've told a lie.
We have all ploughed an acre I'll swear and I'll vow,
And we're all jolly fellows that follows the plough.

7 Then we unharness our horses and away then we go

... (speaks) Oh dear, what comes ... well I know, it comes in like, he gave in tiv 'em and he said he would bring 'em a jug ... they had ti unharness their horses and rub them down well, aye, that was it, 'and I'll bring you a jug of the very best ale.' Like, he gav into t' lad at finish and said they'd all deean weel, you see.⁶

Jack Beeforth's preferred tune for this song is not a 'Villikins and his Dinah' setting, encountered so often in pub singalongs, but a version of the 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt' air found in Frank Kidson's *Traditional Tunes*, a song 'sung with great gusto and loud voices in little publichouses by sporting [fox-hunting] farmers',⁷ and which is also in the Beeforth repertoire. As noted elsewhere in this study, the folk song collector Sabine Baring-Gould cautions others to beware tunes becoming 'deflected and influenced by airs last sung',⁸ and where this is likely, to leave for another 'sitting' any further noting of songs from the assembled singers. Seven weeks separated the Jack Beeforth recordings of 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt'⁹ and 'All Jolly Fellows',¹⁰ so it is unlikely that the Baring-Gould caveat applies here; moreover the present writer is heard to hum the tune 'Villikins and his Dinah' as an encouragement for Jack to start singing 'All Jolly Fellows', an intervention which he ignored.

Nevertheless, the ghost of 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt' text haunts this performance. By verse four, when the singer may be expected to have settled comfortably into the song, he seemingly unconsciously slides into the chorus of 'The Fylingdale Fox-hunt', reaching almost the end of its first line before realising his mistake; this error is caused, perhaps, by a momentary loss of concentration as Jack, a fiercely competitive man, remembered the days of his taking part in ploughing matches, 'To see which of us the straightest furrow can hold'. The confrontation between farmer and ploughman (which Jack Beeforth doubtless regarded

⁶ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 22 June 1974.

⁷ Frank Kidson, *Traditional Tunes*, 137.

⁸ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, xi.

⁹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 10 May 1974.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 June 1974.

ambivalently having himself been, at different times, master and labourer) is handled boldly and personally by the singer: 'But I stepped up to him ...', where in some versions the response is deflected to some other actor: 'The carter turns round with ...'¹¹ and 'The wag'ner stepped out and ...'¹²

The intemperate tone of both the master's accusation, 'You're all lazy fellows' and the ploughman's rejection of it, 'you've told a lie', is not the language of constructive negotiations in labour relations, and here one side capitulates as Jack, forgetting the text, explains ' ... he gav into t' lad at finish and said they'd all deean weel ...' The outcome of the song may leave the ploughman-oriented singer with a feeling of warm satisfaction but the contrived ambience in which the action takes place can, even allowing for some poetic licence, never have been a reality, the farmer inviting his workers to 'rise with goodwill' (1.3), the men 'merrily fly[ing]' (2.2) into the stables and 'trip[ping] o'er the plain boys as nimble as doe' (4.2) and all the while being 'all jolly fellows' (throughout). We may imagine an audience consisting largely of men who had done some ploughing, and the supporting women, finding some irony in these descriptions, and the song being accompanied by groaning, hooting, laughing and cheering in the appropriate places as reality and fancy are heard to collide.

The singer's spoken explanation of the song's denouement (he having forgotten the final part of the text) lets us hear the difference in his dialectal treatment of song and speech. The locally-prevalent vowel colouring is evident in both the song and the talking, but whilst there are few other dialect usages in the song: 1.3 'wi' ', 5.1 'maister', 5.3 ' 'a'n't ', the short observation contains more: 'tiv 'em', 'gav', 't'lad', 'deean', 'weel'. It seems as though when singing here Jack is aware of certain conventions which demand some modification of dialect forms, which do not apply when he is speaking.

¹¹ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, 131.

¹² Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 36.

Jack Beeforth sets off into this song in confident style though the pitch is uncertain, but he establishes by the end of the first line his chosen key of E flat. This text being set to the 'Fylingdale Fox-hunt' tune, the singer's indecision about the fourth line ending persuades him to finish verses 1 and 4 on the leading note, in the latter verse with the calamitous consequence of his going into the chorus of a different song. Jack's health seems to be improved for this recording for his breathing is easy and located comfortably at the end of each line. The 6/8 rhythm of the setting is not so pronounced as in 'Valentine's Day' discussed earlier, where the pulse seemed to echo that of a mature Jack Beeforth riding slowly to hounds. In 'All Jolly Fellows' the singing is freer, for example in 4.4 where the line stumbles as the singer introduces an extra syllable: 'To see which of us the straightest furrow can hold', when he might have sung, were he not of so competitive a disposition: 'To see which of us a straight furrow can hold'. (Then follows the misplaced chorus).



Other rhythmic changes and pronounced differences in stress introduce some rubato, for example in 3.1 and 5.1, without affecting the singer's ability to lay out each verse with temporal evenness. This feature of Jack Beeforth's performance has been noted in his songs discussed earlier; noted earlier, too, is Jack's avoidance of melismatic figures and only one example is seen here, in 4.3 'the-re', where it sounds bland and disappointing and where we would expect Jack to introduce an additional syllable: 'And when we got there, aye, so merry and bold'; Joseph Taylor would be expected to give the figure one of his vibrating mordent flourishes and Walter Pardon perhaps a bending of the melody. In this song, there are few examples of notes which are long enough to hear Jack's clear and sustained use of vibrato

(6.1 and 6.2 'reply' and 'lie' are brief instances). The sonority of Jack Beeforth's voice is characterised by a distinct nasality, helping him to reach with musicality the upper ranges of his songs, and this is overlain by a pleural breathiness which is often heard as a fremescence, almost a growl in the lower ranges. This quality, whether innate, brought about by his illness or by his consumption throughout his adult life of 'one ounce of pipe baccy a week',¹³ brings intimacy and warmth to this performance.

¹³ Notes on conversation: Fthel Pearson, Burniston, 21 November 2000.

III: Joseph Taylor: 'Rufford Park Poachers'¹⁴

♩=160

The musical score is written on four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as ♩=160. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody, with a 3/8 time signature change. The third staff has a 5/8 time signature change. The fourth staff has a 3/4 time signature change. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words underlined. The lyrics are: 'They say that for - ty gal - lant poach - ers they was in a mess. They'd of - ten been at - tack - ed when the num - ber it was less. So poach - er bold as I un - fold, keep up your gal - lant heart, And think a - bout those poach - ers bold, that night in Ruff - ord Park.'

They say that for - ty gal - lant poach - ers they was in a
mess. They'd of - ten been at - tack - ed when the num - ber it was
less. So poach - er bold as I un - fold, keep up your gal - lant
heart, And think a - bout those poach - ers bold, that night in Ruff - ord Park.

Notation from Percy Grainger¹⁵

- 1 They say that forty gallant poachers they was in a mess;
They'd often bidden attackèd when the number it was less.
So poacher bodeld, as I udenfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.
- 2 A buck or doe, believe it so, a pheasant or an 'are
Was sent on earth for ev'ryone quite equil for to share.
So poachers bodeld, as I udenfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.
- 3 The keepers they begun the fight, with stones and with their flails,
But when the poachers started, why, they quickly turned their tails.
So poachers bodeld, as I udenfold, keep up your gallant heart,
And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park.

This short piece was first recorded on phonograph cylinder (his no. 68)¹⁶ by Percy Grainger at Brigg on Sunday 4th August 1906, when Grainger had persuaded Joseph Taylor and a few other singers to sing for him during the weekend of the annual Brigg Fair. It is from this 1906

¹⁴ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*.

¹⁵ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 186-7.

¹⁶ R. W. Pacey, *Folk Music in Lincolnshire*, 29.

recording that Grainger prepared this transcription. Subsequently, in London on 11th July 1908, The Gramophone Company made a recording of Joseph singing the same song (matrix no. 8752e),¹⁷ but the record was never released. The song track on the accompanying CD is from the 1908 recording. We have Percy Grainger's own tacit approval in conflating these two separate sources:

It is astonishing how triflingly a good singer's song will differ in, say, four different phonographs of it. It is my experience that, in the case of singers with alert memories, very little of even the minutest detail is random, but that the smallest rhythmic irregularities are repeated with no less uniformity than are regular rhythms.¹⁸

According to Percy Grainger, Joseph's memory for complete texts, however, was 'not uncommonly good'¹⁹ and he noted after verse 3 that 'The next verse, of which Mr Taylor cannot remember the form, tells of a head-keeper, named Roberts, being killed. Mr Taylor said the song was founded on fact'.²⁰ It appears that it was indeed so, for a 'broadsheet' report of the subsequent trial has been identified by Patrick O'Shaughnessy in the Borough Museum, Mansfield entitled 'The Poaching Affray at Rufford, October 13th 1851: Report of the Trial'. Four men were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to transportation for the term of fourteen years.²¹

Though poaching songs and ballads 'survive in very large numbers',²² Bob Thomson's notes for the LP *Unto Brigg Fair* describe this song as 'unique' since there were no references to it elsewhere. Typologically, 'Rufford Park Poachers' can in important ways be placed alongside 'All Jolly Fellows' since its role, function and effect would have been, as in the other song, to enact a narrative (albeit attenuated in this case) featuring the inequalities evident in an easily recognisable agricultural economic interface, and some of the

¹⁷ <http://www.informatik.uni-hamburg.de~zierke/joseph.taylor/records/untobriggfair.html> [accessed 08.01.04]

¹⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 154.

¹⁹ Ibid., 164.

²⁰ Ibid., 187.

²¹ Patrick O'Shaughnessy, *More Folk Songs from Lincolnshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 56.

²² Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 47.

consequences. It employs motifs and ideas which recognise impulses of self-interest on both sides of the conflict. Stock players are in opposition and the underdog is depicted as holding the moral high ground. If the song is not explicitly about agrarian waged labourers and their work, it is concerned with problems of the rural poor for few poachers would have been in this activity for sport.

Three of the four men convicted at the Rufford Poaching Affray trial were framework knitters and theirs was 'a domestic industry, which, by 1851, was in a state of chronic depression'. The fourth man was a besom maker.²³ O'Shaughnessy sees the enclosures of common land as 'dispossess[ing] the villagers and deny[ing] them their customary right to a rabbit or a bird, a right which often became a dire need with the advance of nineteenth-century industrialism and the distressful decay of the old rural economy'.²⁴ The nineteenth-century agricultural labour leader Joseph Arch (1826-1919) wrote:

I have always been one for keeping of the laws of the land and upholding them as far as possible; but how can I blame these men [poachers] because they would not sit still, and let the life be starved out of them and theirs? They would not; so they risked their liberty ... in their endeavours to obtain food.²⁵

Joseph Taylor, born in 1833, had already reached maturity when transportation for felons was abolished in 1867,²⁶ and being a working-class countryman would have been well acquainted with stories and anecdotes of poaching. In his later role as land agent on a large estate it may be supposed that his perspective and sympathy would have found a new alignment with his land-owning employer and the class to which he belonged. How would he have been persuaded to learn, remember (though here partially) and perform a song so antithetical to his improved position in society?

The song is not the bucolic romp found, for example, in the better-known 'Lincolnshire Poacher'. In 'Rufford Park', the rationale is political, the action violent, the numbers

²³ Patrick O'Shaughnessy, *More Folk Songs from Lincolnshire*, 57.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Roy Palmer, *The Painful Plough*, 34.

²⁶ Anthony Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914* (London: Longmans Green, 1960), 212.

involved great and the outcome, Joseph Taylor would have known, fatal. The sentiments of the ‘Lincolnshire Poacher’ chorus: ‘Oh, ’tis my delight on a shining night in the season of the year’²⁷ are not matched by the chorus in ‘Rufford Park’: ‘So poacher bold, as I unfold, keep up your gallant heart. And think about those poachers bold that night in Rufford Park’. Here the barely-disguised invocation is for each individual poacher (the singular form is used) to consider the advantages of the collective of poaching, and perhaps other, activities. It is not likely that Joseph Taylor’s employer would have approved of Joseph’s choice of this song to sing to Percy Grainger.

The reason for his singing it is not apparent, particularly since it may have reminded him, and others, of his own crime in his earlier days. The song may have been learned in Joseph’s youth and imperfectly remembered here because of the few occasions it had been sung by him since then, and Grainger may have had to persuade him to sing it; Joseph may have regarded it as just a song, with no important deeper meanings for himself or his listeners than its localised text set to a good tune; the singer may have had some sympathies with the basic ethos of the proto-socialist movements which had emerged during his life-time, an ethos which this song seems to espouse:

A buck or doe, believe it so, a pheasant or a hare
Was sent on earth for everyone quite equal for to share.

The song ‘Rufford Park Poachers’ is sung by Joseph Taylor with only faint shadows of the local dialect palette:

a short /u/ for example in ‘Rufford’; ‘powcher’ for ‘poacher’ throughout; ‘ ’are’ for ‘hare’ in 2.1; ‘equil’ for ‘equal’ in 2.2 and a clear nasal stop at the end of ‘pheasant’ in 2.1.

More noticeable than dialectal elements in this song, is Joseph’s use of the inserted meaningless syllable, the epenthetic, which has also featured in the Taylor songs considered

²⁷ John Goss, *Daily Express Community Song Book*, 108.

earlier. Leaving aside the vocal flourishes in the opening part of each verse, this piece is sung with an almost complete absence of melisma but with rich use of the epenthetic, the wordsetting being essentially syllabic: in 1.2 'bold' is 'bodeld'; in 2.2 'bold' is again 'bodeld' and 'unfold' is 'udenfold', a separate syllable for each of the two- and three-note figures which the words encompass. The syllabic shape of the song is further emphasised by the separating, in 1.2, of 'attacked' into the archaic form 'attackèd'.

The armoury of decoration that Joseph deploys in some of his songs is used economically in this one. The pronounced glottal vibration, the 'bleat', is heard as something stronger than many singers' standard vibrato; Joseph needs only a crochet to exhibit the full power of his own, for example in: 1.1 'forty', 1.2 'been', 1.3 'bold'. An even richer sound is produced on the dotted crochets, for example in: 1.2 'less', 1.3 'heart', 1.4 'bold', 1.4 'Park'. The Taylor ornamental device of the upper mordent introduced in a falling musical phrase occurs as the opening figure in each verse.

verse 1



verse 2



The use of these flourishes immediately impresses upon an audience that they are listening to a musically inventive singer who had boldness and skill enough to parade his command of musical ornamentation from the opening bar, where some singers, particularly those performing without instrumental accompaniment, may prefer to feel their way into a

song before exploring their vocal technique. A wide range of Joseph Taylor's other vocal qualities is heard in this recording: a resonant, well-produced tone and projection and a control of dynamics, which while held within a half loud, half soft band that Percy Grainger perceived in folk singers' styles,²⁸ succeeds in maintaining a rich vocal integrity even at the voice's lowest power. In 2.2, for example, 'share' fades almost into falsetto without the vocal collapse heard in some singers, with the vibrato continuing here to the end.

As we have seen throughout this study, instrumentally unaccompanied singers in this genre are not tied to an externally exposed rhythmic structure; Joseph Taylor's use of rubato may allow us to note at least nine rhythmic changes in verse 1 alone, the subtlety of the rhythmic shifts never disturbing the momentum. For example, the staccato ending to 1.1 'in a mess' contrasts with the rhyming but legato 'less' in 1.2, but the forward momentum of the song is maintained. It is only in verse 2 that the singer varies his customary practice of end-of-line breathing by introducing an additional breath in 2.3 after 'udenfold'. At the same time as temporally extending the verse, this serves to allow Joseph briefly to dwell upon the philosophical content of the stanza, and perhaps silently to ask himself, 'Should a man in my position really be singing this song?'

²⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 160.

IV: Walter Pardon: 'All Jolly Fellows who Follow the Plough',²⁹

♩=170

The sun was a - shin - ing at the break of the day. The cocks were a
crow - ing the farm - ers did say Rise my good fell - ows a - rise with good -
will. Your hor - ses want some - thing their bell - ies to fill.

- 1 The sun was a-shining at the break of the day.
The cocks were a-crowing, the farmer did say
‘Rise my good fellows, arise with goodwill,
Your horses want something their bellies to fill.
- 2 Then up came the farmer, ’n this he did say
‘What have you been doing all this long day?
You’m not ploughed an acre, I’ll swear and I’ll vow,
You’re all lazy devils who follows the plough.’
- 3 Then I stepped up to him and this I did say
‘What you have told us it is a damned lie.
We’ve all ploughed an acre I’ll swear and I’ll vow,
We’re all jolly fellows who follow the plough.’

Walter Pardon was a carpenter by trade and had never experienced life as a ploughman. Many of his family had worked on the land however, and he was well aware of the ferment in the agricultural milieu of East Anglia in his childhood and in the years before.³⁰ Mike Yates, who recorded many items from this singer including several songs featuring nineteenth century social unrest and conflict, wrote that the songs’ ‘strength of feeling is

²⁹ Mike Yates, tape recording 4 July 1988.

³⁰ Peter Bellamy, *Folk Review*, 2:1 (1974), 10.

implied today by their being sung by Walter'. Walter had remembered fragments of these songs such as:

They would drive over poor folks
Who stand in the way.
You slave-driving farmers.
You pot-bellied farmers.
You're forced to give way
To the labouring men.

and (a piece probably stemming from the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846)

Soon the ships will be coming in
Loaded with foreign corn
We'll make the farmers rue the day
That ever they were born.³¹

Walter Pardon may have drawn from his life experiences perceptions of some inevitable and perpetual conflict between farmers and their hired labour. He could be expected to have had 'All Jolly Fellows' in his repertoire. Interestingly, although he recalled just a part of the song, the fragment contains only the elements of it which describe the farmer's control and the labour dispute, here delivered with venom: 'You're all lazy devils'; and the rejoinder 'it is a damned lie', is claimed by Walter himself in the first person narrative: 'Then I stepped up to him'. Possibilities that the song might have held humorous, ironic or insincere intent would clearly not do for Walter Pardon, such is the rancour with which he is heard to react to the farmer's accusation.

The Pardon setting to the text is his version of 'Villikins and his Dinah', which here displays some 'Walterising' in the way the rhythm is sometimes distorted and the melody thus bent. In verse two, for example, the rhythmic structure of both lines one and two undergo a brief stumbling shift:

³¹ Mike Yates, 'Stand Up Ye Men of Labour', 26.



This feature seems to echo the stresses and cadences of Walter's spoken dialect. Though only one clear local dialectal construction is heard in the song (in 2.3, 'You'm not ploughed an acre'), definite articles, which are often conspicuously unstressed in Norfolk speechways, almost disappear in 1.1 'The sun' and in 1.2 'The cocks'. Walter's Norfolk diphthongs, though invoked, do not always work, for example in the line endings 3.1 and 3.2 where the non-rhyming 'say' and 'lie' leave the listener unsatisfied.

Dramatic vocal decoration is not a feature of Walter Pardon's singing. He employs vocal embellishment so subtly that, though its use may be detectable only to the careful listener, its absence would substantially diminish the artistic quality of the performance. One such device – the sliding or leaning into a note from above – is heard, for example, in 1.1 'shin-ing' and 'of', 1.4 'to' and 2.2 'all'; and leaning into a note from below, for example, in 3.2 'damned'. A more pronounced figure in 1.2 '-crowing' gives a suggestion of onomatopoeia in the slide from G sharp to C sharp. In many of his songs, as in this one, Walter Pardon, as though investing each verse with a seal of finality, ends the verse's last word with a vocal dying fall, a habit comparable with the custom of some Irish vernacular singers who speak, rather than sing, the last few words of a song they are performing. 'Many Canadian singers speak the last

word or phrase of a song,³² and Sam Henry referred to this practice in Northern Ireland in the 1920s.³³ These idiosyncrasies are not always successful, particularly when, as in this Walter Pardon song, they are overused.

³² Edith Fowke (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 13.

³³ G. Huntington & Lani Herrmann (eds), *Sam Henry's Songs of the People* (Athens Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 464, 511.

V: Frank Hinchliffe: 'We're All Jolly Fellows that Follows the Plough'³⁴

$\text{♩} = 60$

Ear - ly one morn - ing the break of the day, The cock were a - crow - ing the
mast - er did say, All hail my good fell - ows, rise
with a good - will, For yond hor - ses want some - thing their bell - ies to fill.

- 1 Early one morning the break of the day,
The cock were a-crowing, the master did say,
All hail my good fellows, rise with a good will,
For yond horses want something their bellies to fill.
- 2 O we rose and put on our clothes
And into the stable we nimblerly goes;
For wi' rubbin' and scrubbin', I'll swear and I'll vow
That we're all jolly fellows that follows the plough.
- 3 Then six o'clock boys to our breakfast we go
Eggs, 'am and bacon we merry enjoy.
With a bit in our pockets, I'll swear and I'll vow
That we're all jolly fellows that follows the plough.
- 4 we 'arnessed our horses
... (speaks) I'm getting mixed away now. Shut 'im [the tape recorder] off.

Ian Russell noted a longer version from Frank Hinchliffe (the sound recording is unavailable). Frank Hinchliffe appears to have a difficulty with verse four of this song for in both the Yates and Russell versions of his 'All Jolly Fellows' he breaks down at this point.

The tune begins with a passage reminiscent of the seventeenth century anti-Jacobite 'Lilliburlero' (1688) which soon became a popular street song,³⁵ finding even wider

³⁴ Mike Yates, tape recording July 1976.

prominence after being used by Christoph Pepusch and John Gay in the 1728 production of ‘The Beggar’s Opera’.³⁶

This is a song which Frank learned, not in the pub venues where he customarily sang, but from his father, who bequeathed to him the local dialect usage in 1.2 ‘the cock were a-crowing’, and 1.4 ‘For yond horses want something’. Frank’s father, and Frank himself, would share Jack Beeforth’s ambivalence in positioning their sympathies when singing this song – with which actors in it might they reasonably identify? Grace Walton, Frank’s cousin, sang ‘All Jolly Fellows’ to a different tune, a version of ‘Villikins and his Dinah’,³⁷ confusing the possible intra-family routes of the song’s transmission.

As well as having some similarities with the air ‘Lilliberlero’, Frank’s tune also contains echoes of the lullaby ‘Hush a-bye Baby’ and the way in which he sings it manifestly lacks virility and energy, implying a gentler function for the piece than the narrative describes. If this song is about ‘the pride that horsemen have in their occupation’ where ‘ploughmen are urged to stand up for themselves and to “fear not the master”’,³⁸ then this noticeably fragile performance would seem to miss its mark. The fading dynamics wilting into a falsetto on the last word of each verse (and on the last word of each line in verse three) bring unwanted and unwarranted delicacy to the text, and the absence of attack conceals the pace of the song which is almost exactly that adopted by both Jack Beeforth and Walter Pardon.

Frank Hinchliffe’s subtle use of decoration is sometimes heard as an anticipatory leap – here this appears in 2.3 ‘I’ll’ and 3.3 ‘I’ll’ again – or as a falling slide, for example, 1.4 ‘their’. Common in Joseph Taylor’s performances, but unusual in those of this singer, is the interpolation of an additional syllable to evade a melismatic figure, examples of which Cecil

³⁶ Michael Kennedy, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 64.

³⁷ Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, tape recording, date uncertain.

³⁸ Reg Hall, *Come All My Lads that Follow the Plough* (London: Topic Records TSCD655, 1998), liner notes, 10.

Sharp gives as: ‘wordelkin’ [walking], ‘tordelkin’ [talking] and ‘ordel’ [all].³⁹ Frank Hinchliffe’s ‘nimberly’ [nimbly] in 2.2 is the sole example in this song of his use of this device. It illustrates how such morphological inventiveness can enrich a song’s euphony and rhythmic integrity, for here a two-syllable three-note ‘nimbly’ would surely have brought bathos to the tune, as well as invalidating the idea of agility and liveliness which the three-syllable ‘nimberly’ implies.

The Hinchliffe performance of ‘All Jolly Fellows’ does not persuade us that the song’s story, after Marek Korczynski, is ‘unequivocally about control and resistance’, but other singers in this vernacular genre, including Walter Pardon, have certainly seen the song in that light:

The song *We’re All Jolly Fellows Who Follow the Plough*, ... is, on the surface, a simple enough song in praise of farm labour. In the mid-70’s, while collecting in Sussex, two independent singers [Harry Upton and Harry Holman]⁴⁰ told me that they would sing this song at harvest suppers. It would be not only for the benefit of local dignitaries and guests of honour (often townspeople), but also for their fellow workers who were well aware that the song was not about a carefree country existence, but a medium for expressing all that was wrong in society. Despite what the farm owners might think, their workers were not jolly fellows. They did not enjoy rising at dawn to work all day in a wet plough field, and they were not happy about their employer’s paternalism.⁴¹

³⁹ Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, 109.

⁴⁰ Notes on conversation: Mike Yates, Berwick-on-Tweed, 25 November 2003.

⁴¹ Mike Yates, ‘Stand Up Ye Men of Labour’, 26.

12

HOW FOUR MEN SING: A SENTIMENTAL SONG

I: Introduction

This section sets out and compares the performance of the four featured men, each singing a song which is categorised as sentimental, that is, is concerned with evoking sympathy and pity; with separation; with loss and lost experience; with contemplation of death. No matching title for the Beeforth song is available from the other three singers, so in each case an alternative is selected.

Table 12.1: Sentimental songs

singer	song	date recorded	singer's age	recorded by
Jack Beeforth	Go and Leave Me	22.06.1974	83	David Hillery
Joseph Taylor	I Wish My Baby	09/11.07.1908	77	Percy Grainger
Walter Pardon	If I Were a Blackbird	03.08.1978	64	Mike Yates
Frank Hinchliffe	The Gipsy's Warning	02.09.1970	47	Ian Russell

Jack Beeforth's 'Go and Leave Me' does not cross over, either textually or melodically, to any of the other repertoires here considered, but it does bear important affinities with other sentimental songs in these repertoires. Joseph Taylor's 'I Wish My Baby' (also called 'Died for Love'), Walter Pardon's 'If I Were a Blackbird' and Frank Hinchliffe's 'The Gipsy's Warning' are examples of such songs, and they have been selected for comparison with the Beeforth 'Go and Leave Me'. (Walter Pardon's 'Go and Leave Me' was recorded as a one-verse fragment and is not considered here.)

II: Jack Beeforth: 'Go and Leave Me'

$\text{♩} = 60$

Once I loved with fond aff - ec - tion. All his thoughts they were on me. Un - til a
dark girl did per - suade him, And then he thought no more of me.
Go and leave me if you wish it. Nev - er let me cross your
mind. For if you think I'm so un - worth - y, Go and leave me and ne - ver mind.

- 1 Once I loved with fond affection
All 'is thoughts they were on me,
Until a dark girl did persuade 'im,
And then he thowt no more of me.
- 2 And now 'e's 'appy with another,
One that 'as bright gold in store.
'Twas him that made my fond heart fonder,
And I am left alone because I'm poor.

*Go and leave me if you wish it.
Never let me cross your mind,
For if you think I'm so unworthy
Go and leave me and never mind.*

- 3 Many-a-night with 'im I've rambled.
Many hours together we've spent.
I thought 'is 'eart it was mine forever,
But that I find was honly lent.
- 4 My 'eart 'as failed and you know it,
A 'eart that fondly beats for thee.
'Owever could I tell another
The tales of love I've told to thee.
- 5 Many-a-night when you are sleeping,
Thinking of your sweet repose,
While I poor girl laid 'ere heartbroken,
Listening to the winds that blows.

- 6 Farewell friends and kind relations.
Farewell to you, my false young man,
It's you that's caused me pain and sorrow,
And never more will I return.

(The chorus, in italics, comes after verses 2, 4 and 6.)

The four songs we are now considering are affiliated not only by their thematic similarities but also by the first-person positioning of each of their texts. Moreover the four, male, singers are performing songs clearly intended to be sung if not by a woman, then by a singer embodying female perspectives. Such personifications are not unusual in this genre of song, for it is plainly credible for townsmen to be ploughboys within the drama of a text, and for a farmworker to be the embodiment of Jack Tar. Men have for centuries impersonated women in the theatrical milieu, and, in the vernacular arena where these four singers performed, the dearth of women singers would have encouraged men to take up for themselves songs that appealed to them, however voiced. Nevertheless, it is curious that each of our performers had chosen to sing, as a woman, a piece of extravagant sentimentality which was probably out of keeping, given his occupation, with the manly virtues he demonstrably epitomised.

Richard Hoggart listened to singing in working-men's clubs in the 1950s and commented on the singing of such songs in that setting:

The manner of singing is traditional and has fixed characteristics ... it aims to suggest a deeply-felt emotion (for the treachery of a loved one, for example) ... it is still assumed that deep emotions about personal experiences are something all experience and in a certain sense share.¹

'Far back behind the whole working-men's club scene', Hoggart could just see 'the outlines of the generations of folk-singing and folk-musicians who had gone before'. 'Go and Leave Me' is an archetype for pieces which are collections of verses apparently floated in from other sources and strung together to make a more-or-less cohesive and coherent song. Pub singers have liked songs of this type, for they have short lines whose last words almost demand to be prolonged, they have great swoops of melody and choruses which are easy to

¹ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* [1957] (London: Penguin, 1962), 154.

remember and slow and satisfying to sing; this one is in some ways reminiscent of the once-favourite song of pub and charabanc, 'Nelly Dean'. Such songs would have been attached to a manner of performance which Hoggart described as the 'big-dipper' style (named after a fairground switch-back ride) where 'each emotional phrase is pulled out and stretched' and where 'there is a pause as each emotional phrase is completed, before the great rise to the next and over the top', with the whole effect being 'increased by a nasal quality'.²

This performance is one of Jack Beeforth's freest. He sings 'Go and Leave Me' not as parody but seriously and with respect. He does not find, in this song, a whole line's singing too difficult, except in verse five at the start of which his coughing seems to disconcert him; a breath at the end of each line is perfectly suited to the song's type. The practised instrumentally-unaccompanied vernacular singer often displays the seemingly natural and instinctive capability of internally holding metre and rhythm as a quasi-metronomic datum, which may be referred to, emphasised, departed from or resorted to according to the stylistic requirements of the song's interpretation; this innate ability also helps the singer to resume and complete a performance after interruptions caused, for example, by coughing, loss of breath, memory lapse or audience intervention.

The six verses of 'Go and Leave Me', being a reflection on lost love, contain no coherent narrative, and the three choruses inserted after each pair of stanzas serve essentially to intensify the singer's declared misery. Disciplined by the lexical economy of the trochaic tetrameter to which the piece is set (though with one syllable missing at the end of lines two and four), the singer is made to explore those devices of performance which heighten the pathos and sentimentality of the text. He must seek to avoid excessive and inappropriate use of artifice which might result in over-artificiality and risibility. Henry Longfellow, claims James Fenton, chose the 'tum-ti' two-syllable, four feet rhythm of trochaic tetrameter for his

² Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 154.

poem, 'The Song of Hiawatha' because he wanted to convey the impression of an oral poetry:³

He is dead, the sweet musician!
He the sweetest of all singers!
He has gone from us forever,
He has moved a little nearer
To the Master of all music,
To the Master of all singing!
O my brother, Chibiabos!⁴

In the likely orality of its transmission, 'Go and Leave Me' solidly convinces. The regular temporal value of each verse displays the singer's skill in controlling the pace of the song, and this is a feature now expected from this singer. Variation in pace and attack within each verse is often necessary to keep an audience interested. Irregularity in phrasing, speeding up, slowing down and pausing are devices which Jack Beeforth often used in order to add variety, intensity, interest and atmosphere. Many of these features are heard here. The rubato in 2.1, for example, makes the 'with another' phrase hurry the text as though the singer is not able to bear the idea of someone else taking his place:



An anticipatory slide (1.1 'Once I') assists the singer to negotiate the tricky sixth C – A leap he has to make at the beginning of the song, which being successfully completed allows him to go on with a jaunty staccato in 'with fond affection'. Line 2 has the immediate challenge of an octave interval C to C, in preparation for which the singer eschews the slide device as if to gather himself for this fence (as the horseman in him might see it), so as to deliberately separate and attack 'All 'is thoughts'. The upper C having being precariously

³ James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry*, 40.

⁴ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 317.

achieved, Jack suggests, but does not overemphasise, the pathos and poignancy from the loss and abandonment described in line 3, giving successive slides on ‘a’ and ‘dark’, moaning precursors to the rich vibrato of the song’s last word – a prolonged ‘me’, loaded with self-pity. The careful listener may identify over fifty uses of the Beeforth slide decoration during this performance. In 3.2, for example, it is heard three times: ‘... hours together we’ve ...’ but the frequent deployment of this figure does not cloy for, because of its delicate shading, it is often sensed rather than detected.

‘Go and Leave Me’ is about love and its loss, but in the six verses and three choruses the word ‘love’ features only twice though in each case meaningfully: in 1.1 ‘Once I loved with fond affection’, when Jack’s voice trembles with uncertainty on ‘loved’, and in 4.4 ‘The tales of love I’ve told to thee’ where ‘love’ is stressed, and unsure and fleeting, perhaps an apposite description of love itself for some in the singer’s audience.

It is in the deliberate and mannered separation of syllables that we hear Jack’s most determined use of stylistic invention, for example, in 4.1 ‘My heart has failed and you know it’. It is possible that this is an artful way in which the singer has learned to maintain his breath control as he has aged, but it is more likely that he has long used this technique for passages that he considered important and which he wanted to emphasise; the text, tune, pace and sentiments of ‘Go and Leave Me’ together provide an excellent vehicle for this stilted but effective feature.

Love songs have not commonly been carriers of dialect in this genre, and here only in 1.4 ‘thowt’ do we hear a hint of local colour, and in 1.2 ‘thoughts’ less so. That is not to say that echoes of local speechways are not present in this song; the dropped /h/ appears frequently as in 2.1 ‘And now ’e’s ’appy ...’. This is not always the product of elision, for example, 4.2 ‘A ’eart ...’ is heavily stressed and separated, as is 4.3 ‘ ’Ow-ever’. A performance by Jack Beeforth would rarely be complete without at least one example of the added initial aspirate,

and here he uses it to give dramatic underscoring to the betrayal in 3.4 'But that I find was honly lent'.

There are many pleasing aspects in Jack Beeforth's performance here – his controlled rather nasal vibrato; the regulated dynamics even on open vowels and notes in his higher vocal range; the command of momentum; the yearning and empathy he displays; his excellent sense of pitch – all qualities which enhance his interpretation of a love song, even in the eighty-fourth year of his life.

III: Joseph Taylor: 'I Wish My Baby It Was Born' ('Died for Love')³

$\text{♩} = 160$

I wish my ba - by it é was born, Ly - in' smi - lin'

on ³ its fath - er's knee, Ad - end I was dead and

in my grave ³ And green grass grow - in' all ov - er me.

Notation by Percy Grainger⁶

- 1 I wish my baby it é was born
Lyn' smilin' on its father's knee
And I was dead and in my grave
And green grass growin' all over me.
- 2 I wish. I wish but it's all in vain
I wish I was a maid again
But a maid again that never shall be
Since that é young farmer sat wooing me.
- 3 Dig me my grave, long wide and deep
Put a marbil stone at my 'ead and feet
But a turtle white dove put over above
For to let the world know that I died for love.

This transcription of 'Died for Love' was prepared by Percy Grainger from a recording he made in July 1906. The recording heard here was made in July 1908. Grainger's tacit approval is again invoked in conflating these two separate sources. The 'trifling differences' Grainger claimed for different performances of a song from the same singer, is seen in his transcription of the 1906 recording in 1.3 'A-dend' (and), when it is clear from the 1908 recording that no syllabic separation occurs.

³ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*.

⁶ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 188.

The text of Joseph Taylor's 'Died for Love' is expressed in lines of four two-syllable iambic feet while Jack Beeforth's 'Go and Leave Me' is in two-syllable trochaic ('tum-ti') form. This prosodic arrangement is manifestly congenial to this type of song. In 'Died for Love', moreover, the iambic accenting ('ti-tum') is equally successful in allowing the singer to bring out the pathos and anguish as the piteous abandoned woman laments her loss with death the expected outcome. Whilst 'Go and Leave Me' is sung in the major, Ionian, mode and importantly relies on melodic interval and singer interpretation for much of its impact, 'Died for Love' is given in the Dorian mode which, to many ears, is impregnated with desolation and sadness without reference to the text.

A. L. Lloyd identifies this tune as one of the pieces 'scattered as folk songs all over Europe and reappearing time and again in the English country-side'. Lloyd describes its descent from the fifteenth century Burgundian dance, 'Le petit roysin':

The tune is a four-liner, regularly-phrased, built on a compact architectonic skeleton, with the first and last lines ending on the tonic and the second line-end... cadencing on the fifth above the keynote ... and finally [appearing] as one of the best-known English love-songs, the lament called 'Died for love' which a famous folk-singer, Joseph Taylor, sang into Percy Grainger's Phonograph at Brigg, Lincolnshire, in 1906.⁷

Anne G. Gilchrist, an enthusiast belonging to the first Folk Song Revival, pointed out that 'the first four bars of this beautiful tune are curiously like the opening phrase of the tune to Psalm lxxx in the Scottish Psalter of 1635,⁸ this date being later corrected to 1564-65 by Patrick O'Shaughnessy,⁹ showing the difficulties in tracing a song's provenance.

Like 'Go and Leave Me', Joseph Taylor's 'Died for Love' is made up of 'floating' verses, both songs being reflection of mood and not tied to a narrative. A. L. Lloyd has described floating verses as they appear in folk songs:

[Songs] make use of a stock of symbolic or epigrammatic verses that are combined or recombined in song after song, so that often it is hard to tell one

⁷ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 81-2.

⁸ Anne G Gilchrist, *JFSS* 12:3 (1908), 189.

⁹ Patrick O'Shaughnessy, *Twenty-One Lincolnshire Folk-Songs*, 29.

piece from another. 'This stock of common-place lyrical 'floaters' (so called because they float with ease from one song to another) is relatively restricted, comprising not many more than fifty tropes in all ... The verses are usually concerned with love, especially love betrayed or denied, and a repertory of such verses provides a handy kit for making countless songs almost at will.¹⁰

Cecil Sharp's assertion that a folk singer 'but rarely sings more than one note to a single syllable'¹¹ was a rule which was occasionally broken, he said, by the singer's introduction of superfluous notes for the sake of ornament. In 'Died for Love', Joseph Taylor, a frequent user of ornament, inserts vocal flourishes as upper mordents between two adjacent notes carrying the same syllable in musically falling phrases. These occur at the same place in lines 2, 3 and 4 of each verse omitting only in 3.2 a mordent on 'stone', because of the need to accommodate 'at'.

$\text{♩} = 160$

Dig me ³ my grave long, wide and deep, Put a mar - bil

stone at my head and feet; But a tur - tle white dove ³ put

ov - er a - bove For to let the world know that I died ³ for love.

So rich is Joseph's vibrato that it is sometimes difficult for the listener to differentiate between bleat and ornament, for example in 1.4 'over'; but in 3.4 'died' a distinct glottal crack is heard as the singer enriches the pathos at the song's end. Melisma in this piece is heard not only during figures carrying this ornament. In 1.2, 'and' and 'dead' carry over two notes, which together with the mordent on 'grave' give, for Joseph, an unusually dense

¹⁰ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 178-9.

¹¹ Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*, 109.

occurrence of three melismatic elements in one line. The piece, moreover, displays examples of additional and meaningless syllables which, if absent, would have given an even more roundly melismatic feel to the song: 1.1 'it è was' and 2.4 'that è young'.

Like Jack Beeforth in 'Go and Leave Me', Joseph Taylor's performance of 'Died for Love' shows respect for the song's words and sentiments. Dialectal sound-colouring is modified to the extent that it has almost disappeared in this song. In 3.2 'marbil' for 'marble' only seems to accentuate the reverence which the singer brings to the song. Joseph Taylor had been, as has been shown, a long-serving member of his church choir in Saxby-All-Saints, and he would have been sensitive to the expected standards of performance, including pronunciation, when singing choral pieces. The degree to which his experience with the choir informed and affected his singing in the vernacular idiom can only be a matter of speculation; it is possible, however, that he would have sensed a latitude and licence to include idiomatic forms and expression not sanctioned in devotional singing (though these are muted in this particular piece). Percy Grainger certainly stimulated and commended the use of dialectal elements from his singers. Grainger would, too, have encouraged Joseph's use of the decorative features, possibly transferred from liturgical practice, of his singing style, which together with his distinctive vocal colouring and phrasing, have given in 'Died for Love' a sincere, musically satisfying and emotionally touching performance.

IV: Walter Pardon: 'If I Were a Blackbird'¹²

$\text{♩} = 120$

I am but a poor girl my life it is sad, Ma - ny months I've been
 court - ing a fine sai - lor lad, I court - ed him tru - ly by
 night and by day, And now on a trans - port he's gone far a - way.

- 1 I am but a poor girl, my life it is sad
 Many months I've been courting a fine sailor lad
 I courted him truly, by night and by day
 And now on a transport, he's gone far away.

*If I were a blackbird, I'd whistle, I'd sing
 I'd follow the vessel my true love sailed in
 High on the top rigging I'd there build my nest
 I'd lay all night long on his lily-white breast.*

- 2 My love he was handsome in every degree
 But my parents despised him because he loved me
 And let them despise him and say what they will
 Whilst there's breath in my body I'll love my lad still.
- 3 He promised to take me to Donnybrook fair
 With a bunch of pink ribbon to tie up my hair
 And If I could see him, I'd greet him with joy
 Upon the fond lips of my young sailor boy.
- 4 If I were a scholar and could handle my pen
 Such a fond, loving letter to him I would send
 I'd tell him my troubles my joys and my woe
 On the wings of a blackbird together we'd go.

(The chorus, in italics, comes after each verse.)

¹² Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*.

‘If I Were a Blackbird’ has commanded a greater currency than many other songs considered in this study. The frequent airing on BBC record request programmes of the recordings made by the Irish folklorist Delia Murphy in the 1930s, and by the whistling and singing entertainer Ronnie Ronalde in the 1960s, once made this song known to a wide audience. Rod Stradling has suggested that this ‘may have fixed it in people’s memories’ for it always ‘turns up with exactly the same number of verses – there are never any “floating” verses attached’.¹³

Walter Pardon’s treatment of the song, if learned from one or both of these sources, is not a slavish copy but bears the imprint of Walter’s refashioning of tune and phrasing. (Although Walter’s record collection at his death of 92 items included many of Irish performers and Irish songs, ‘If I Were a Blackbird’ was not featured in it.)¹⁴ The reference to Donnybrook Fair in 3.1 does suggest an Irish connection for the song, for Donnybrook was the site in Co. Dublin of the famous riotous fairs which were stopped in 1855,¹⁵ with the term ‘donnybrook’ continuing commonly in Ireland to this day as a synonym for a rowdy brawl. References to fairs occur frequently in vernacular song and often singers like to personalise the text by using the name of a local fair, but here Walter prefers to retain the exotic.

This arid narrative makes it necessary to interpret much of the storyline, where in verse 1 the sailor lad at home for ‘many months’ has ‘now on a transport gone far away’, suggesting a journey to a penal colony or a long voyage in the merchant marine. The woman is retaining hope of ultimate reconciliation in spite of parental disapproval (verse 2), broken promises (verse 3) and fractured communications brought about by her illiteracy (verse 4), and in this hope she is distanced from the pessimism of the storylines of the two earlier songs.

The scansion of the text suggests a dactylic ‘tum-ti-ti’ four feet per line structure which a singer may interpret as a simple three-four rhythm. Walter has sensed that this treatment

¹³ Rod Stradling, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, liner notes, 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ E. M. Horsley (ed.), *Hutchinson 20th Century Encyclopedia* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 406.

would not suit his perception of the mood of the song, and he determinedly imposes a marked discontinuity on most of the song's lines: there are 27 distinct breathing caesuras in the total of 32 lines in verses and choruses, with (usually) six syllables in the first part of the line and five syllables in the second, in this essentially syllabic word setting. In 1.2 'Many months I've been courting a fine sailor lad', we hear the line sung coherently without a pause, but in the same verse 1.4, (caesura = /) 'And now on a transport / he's gone far away', the line and the sense are disjointed.

The purpose of the singer's strategy throughout the song, it may be conjectured, is to liberate himself from the constraints of an inexorable rhythmic pulse, and to enable him to sing freely in expressing the yearning and sadness of the woman in the song. The singer, not the imposed rhythm, is deciding where rubato, phrasing, tempo may be subtly changed and incorporated to fashion this into a love song. Walter succeeds in crafting this piece into a song readily identifiable with 'Go and Leave Me' and 'Died for Love', and worthy, he would have thought, for him to sing, though he was a bachelor and partnerless all his days. The listener may hear that Walter has escaped the straightjacket of a three-four rhythm only to settle into the even tighter control of a reiterative syllable-determined structure which becomes tedious by the song's end.

The performance is not flowing, though in a song of mood and atmosphere it may be argued that this is not a prerequisite. Unlike Joseph Taylor, who seems to flaunt his techniques of vocal decoration, Walter Pardon applies his modestly and delicately and it appears in this song chiefly as an anticipatory slide heard, for example, in 3.4 'fond' and 'sail-or'. The singer Peggy Seeger has noted that:

Many English folk singers use this decoration. When it is used all the time it makes a melody smoother and less four-square. For this reason it is very useful in songs with marked rhythms ... in 4/4 time or 3/4 [time]. Putting

anticipation here and there makes the rhythm less marked and the melody smoother.¹⁶

In 'All Jolly Fellows', Walter ended each verse with a parlando-like dying fall on the last word; echoes of this feature occur in 'If I Were a Blackbird', for example, in 2.4 'still', and 4.4 'go', though in this song it is neither used as frequently nor is it as pronounced. In his description of the 'big-dipper' style of singing in 1950s English working-men's clubs, Richard Hoggart described one of its distinctive elements:

The most immediately recognizable characteristic is the 'ēr' extension to emotionally important work, which I take to be the result partly of the need to draw every ounce of sentiment from the swing of the rhythm, and partly of the wish to underline the pattern of the emotional statement. The result is something like this

You are-ēr the only one-ēr for me-ēr
No one else-ēr can share a dream-ēr with me-ēr ...¹⁷

To draw attention to Walter's occasional use of a similar, though less ponderous, figure is not to couple him with the generality of club entertainers in view of his reluctance to visit public houses or working-men's clubs. The occasional appearance of such a form in Walter's singing does however raise the question of its genesis here; was it perhaps a relic of some half-forgotten but once-admired singing he had heard, or did this apparent affectation spring naturally from the same sentiment that Richard Hoggart heard and which he attributed to 'a feeling of warm and shared humanity'?¹⁸ Its appearance in Walter's performances may, in either case, have been overtly or silently discouraged by some of the folk revivalists who made their way to Norfolk to collect his songs; its survival may be Walter's way of snubbing their *arriviste* attitudes. A. L. Lloyd himself was once heard to muse 'Why is it that singers like Walter love to sing such appalling songs?'¹⁹

¹⁶ Peggy Seeger, 'Ornamentation and Variation for the Folk Revival Singer' (Birmingham: 1966), lecture notes.

¹⁷ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 154-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁹ Private communication: Jim Carroll, 20 March 2003.

V: Frank Hinchliffe: 'The Gipsy's Warning'²⁰

$\text{♩} = 70$

Do not trust him gent - le la - dy though 'is voice be low and
 sweet. Heed him not who kneels be - fore thee plead - ing gent - ly at thy feet. Though thy
 life be in its morn - ing cloud not thus thy gent - le love List - en
 to the gyp - sy's warn - ing gent - le la - dy trust him not.

- 1 Do not trust him gentle lady, though 'is voice be low and sweet.
 Heed him not who kneels before thee, pleading gently at thy feet.
 Though thy life be in its morning, cloud not thus thy gentle love [lot?].
 Listen to the gipsy's warning, gentle lady, trust him not.
- 2 Lady, turn not coldly from me, I would only guard thy youth
 From 'is stern and with 'rin' power, I would only tell thee truth.
 I would guard thee from all danger, shield thee from the tempest's snare.
 Lady, shun that dark-eyed stranger, I 'ave warned thee, now beware.
- 3 Lady, once there lived a maiden, pure and bright and like thee fair,
 Who 'e wooed and wooed and won her, filled her gentle heart with care.
 But he heeded not her weeping nor cared he a life to save.
 Soon she perished, now she's sleeping in a cold and silent grave.
- 4 Take thy gold, I do not want it, I 'ave only longed for this,
 For the hour when I might foil 'im, rob 'im of expected bliss.
 Gentle lady, thou may wonder at my words so cold and wild.
 Lady, in that green grave yonder lies a gipsy's only child.

The references by Richard Hoggart to the 'big-dipper' were directed towards a particular style of singing rather than to the song itself, the style arising from a combination of song

²⁰ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*. Hin 20.

sentiment and a spectacularly undulating melody as the appropriate vehicle for its expression. ‘The Gipsy’s Warning’ might be the epitome of such songs. In these songs, declared Hoggart, ‘the voice takes enormous lifts and dips to fill out the lines of a lush emotional journey’, which for pubs and clubs is ‘reduced in scale and made more homely; the “big-dipper” adopted for use in a moderately sized room’.²¹

The sentiments contained in the words of this song are palpably richly emotional losing little in anguish by being uttered by a character (the mother) at one remove from the story’s victim. Moreover, the melodic line exhibits three great leaps of more than an octave (B flat to D) and two dips of a sixth (B flat to D). This song, then, may be regarded as an ideal instrument for a ‘big-dipper’ style of performance, but Frank Hinchliffe brings a different perspective to it. Ian Russell, Frank’s chronicler, saw his songs as falling into two well-defined groupings – love songs having their popular origins on broadsides between approximately 1750 and 1850, and songs about death dating from a later period, being first heard in the context of the drawing room or Victorian music hall. Russell commented on the way in which Frank sang them:

Each group has its distinctive stylistic features in both melody and lyric and yet, in Frank’s repertoire they are treated alike. He makes no concession to either group in his style of singing; tone production, rhythmic variation and ornamentation remain constant. Thus, in spite of contrasts that exist in the constituents of his repertoire, in performance Frank achieves a remarkable unity.²²

Some may hear this ‘remarkable unity’ as banal uniformity. One is reminded that the recordings heard in this study appear to have been made at Frank’s home, where he used ‘a plaintive, almost delicate, tone’ and not at the pub for which he reserved ‘a more robust style’,²³ and where audiences may have heard a different treatment of ‘The Gipsy’s Warning’.

²¹ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 154.

²² Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, 81.

The prosodic structure here is that of Jack Beeforth's 'Go and Leave Me' except that the trochaic (tum-ti) lines are of eight feet, twice the length of the Beeforth song and allow the use of lavish imagery and literary pretension, for example, 1.3 'Though thy life be in its morning, cloud not thus thy gentle love [lot?].' Jack Beeforth's song's romance ends in 1.4 with the frugal 'And then he thowt no more of me', Frank's with the bloated 3.3 'But he heeded not her weeping nor cared he a life to save'.

One may have heard a pub singer giving voice in 1.1 to the tenth leap: 'him / gent' and bringing to this figure a heavily flourished glissando, intending to steep the phrase in pleading anguish. Frank Hinchliffe's treatment of the phrase, and of the repetition of it in subsequent lines and verses, spurns this technique, articulating the two distinct syllables in the text to effect a separation of the two notes sung. In this he echoes Jack Beeforth. Exceptionally for Frank, in 1.3 another vaulting figure, a sixth, is sung melismatically since it contains only the monosyllable 'life'. In a song of such gushing sentimentality, however, recurrent melisma might be presumed, and in 1.3 'life', 'in', 'morn' and 'love' each single syllable is sung over two notes, and the effect is touching and sincere.

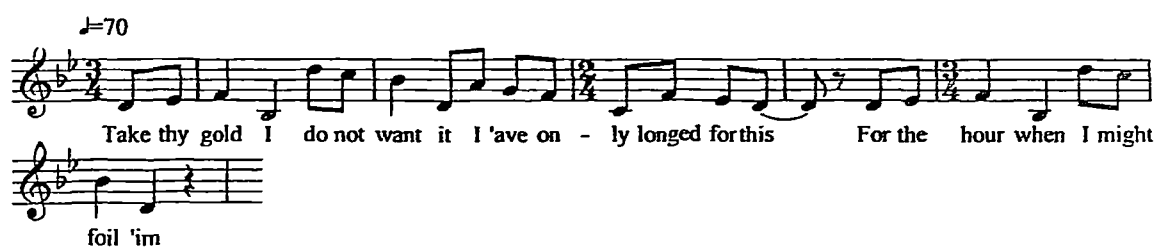
Frank's 'delicate and plaintive' home singing style referred to earlier, perhaps reflecting his respect for his homely domestic arrangements, gives some modification to the amplitude and power of the dynamics of his performance, though wherever he sang he 'never sang fortissimo or in a declamatory manner'.²⁴ The tendency in his singing for his voice to die into a falsetto-like fade is heard in the first line of the song, the text coincidentally mirroring this aspect of his performance: 1.1 '... though 'is voice be low and sweet'. By 3.4, the falsetto fade-out cracks at the line's ending 'grave' and the song ends, 4.4, with the apparently emotional singer almost unable to voice the last word 'child'.

Patterns in phrasing and rubato here do not always seem to be a product of the singer's textual interpretation, but merely of its position in the verse. The first two lines of the four

²⁴ Ian Russell, *FMJ* 7:1 (1995), 123.

stanzas are each sung through to the line's end without breath or pause (3.2 is an exception).

Lines three and four of all verses are divided by a marked caesura, though sometimes the pause is unnatural and impairs the textual sense, for example in 4.3, 'Gentle lady, thou may wonder / at my words so cold and wild'. In the final verse 4 a determined *accelerato* in line 1 '...I 'ave only longed for this', the true, vengeful, motives for the gipsy's intervention are underlined by the *rubato*, the quality of voice-tone and the resolve heard in the articulation.



It is in songs such as 'The Gipsy's Warning', and especially in its last verse, that the most telling medium for Frank Hinchliffe's timbre, articulation, emotional interpretation and sincerity is to be located, for here Frank imparts no nuances of ridicule or absurdity to the song with its vaulting melodic passages and its text of deep sentimentality, which so many singers, though not those featured in this study, have sometimes endeavoured to lampoon.

HOW FOUR MEN SING: A SUMMARY

I: Introduction

The selection of the three singers who have been set beside Jack Beeforth in this study – Joseph Taylor, Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe – took account of the singers' gender, their social positioning, their geographical location and rural deployment, the temporal overlapping of their lives, the vernacular milieu in which they customarily performed their songs and the availability of sufficient recorded material and other pertinent data to permit productive comparison to be made. Their selection has allowed, in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, comparison and evaluation of, among other things, the singers' personal narratives, the social and economic context of their lives, and their repertoires; in Chapters 9 to 12 their performance styles have been discussed (and these have been aurally experienced, since there are no associated film or video-tape recordings of these singers performing their songs). Now, in Chapter 13, important themes and issues emerging from the findings are discussed, and conclusions are drawn on the specific, and the broader, similarities and differences apparent from the analysis.

The routes by which his songs may have come down to Jack Beeforth have been discussed in Chapter 5, but the influences on his performance style need briefly to be explored. Jack had never been to one of the second Folk Song Revival's folk clubs and no evidence has emerged that he knew of their existence. When he was farming at Wragby (until 1933) and later at Cook Farm (until 1960), the family did not own a record player. The

Beeforth's first battery-operated wireless was acquired in 1937 and it may have been through this medium that Jack would, if at all, have heard any other than his family, friends and neighbours singing his type of song. In 1937 Jack was 46 and may have already developed many of the characteristics of a singing style which would be sustained through to his old age.

According to his own account of his early singing, some of his performances would have demanded a voice of some robustness which would carry in the open air or from under a canvas awning, sung from 'a barrel, a cart or a rulle [an open-sided four-wheeled wagon] or owt'.¹ 'And how many people would be listening to you?' he was asked. 'Oh, hundreds at sports. Sometimes they had it in t' pubs where they had sports, you see, singing'. 'And how many people used to enter for these competitions?' 'Oh, a lot. Almost anybody would have a go for a bit of fun, you know'.² Fun and humour was clearly an important element in Jack's selection of songs to learn and sing, for a quarter of all his songs may be described as 'comic', having, essential to the narrative, some joke or foolery. Such songs would have been easier to communicate to large festive gatherings in open spaces than would his songs containing themes of love and tender emotions, which Jack may have reserved for a more intimate ambience. Listeners to Jack's singing should recognise that his performance style was developed for alfresco, acoustic, monophonic delivery, as well as for the contrasting sonority and audience proximity of the bar-parlours of Jack's favourite public houses, The Flask Inn, The Shepherd's Arms and The Falcon. It seems likely that any stylistic elements developed by those who most importantly influenced Jack's singing – his father George, grandfather William and neighbouring farmers – would have been similarly shaped.

¹ Taped conversation: Jack Beeforth, Sleights, 20 April 1974.

² Ibid.

II: Summary of the songs discussed

The following table summarises the songs performed by the singers featured in this part of the study.

Table 13.1: The songs' summary

singer	Song			
	amatory	sporting	work	sentimental
	A narrative episodic account of love and wooing; unrequited love or inaccessible love	Describing or reflecting a sport or sporting event	Describing the rituals of or relationships at work	Evoking sympathy and pity; separation of lovers; death
Jack Beeforth	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	Last Valentine's Day	All Jolly Fellows	Go and Leave Me
Joseph Taylor	The Gipsy's Wedding Day	The White Hare	Rufford Park Poachers	I Wish My Baby
Walter Pardon	The Banks of Sweet Dundee	The Huntsman	All Jolly Fellows	If I Were a Blackbird
Frank Hinchliffe	The Golden Glove	While Forging of My Scales and Springs	All Jolly Fellows	The Gipsy's Warning

III: Features of four men's singing

Some of the more significant features of the four men's singing, including use of dialect, handling of temporal structure, melodic treatment, use of voice and notions of 'truth' are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn on the broader similarities and differences evident between the four singers, and whether their shared preferences and apparent commonalities can be considered to describe a 'tradition'.

1 Use of dialect

Cecil Sharp had noted that ‘Every folk-singer uses his own native language, and consequently the words of the folk-song will be sung in as many different dialects as the districts in which each individual song is found’.³ It has been shown that Jack Beeforth’s spoken English was heavily impregnated with lexical, grammatical and phonetic dialectal usage strongly characteristic of the North Yorkshire locality in which he had always lived, but that in his singing this dialectal overlay was modified and muted. In the amatory narrative and episodic ‘Sweet Dundee’, Jack’s aspirates, elided here, inserted there, and cropped /t’/ of an occasional definite article – a subtle blend of voice quality, duration and pitch changes – are no more than hints of the local dialectal resources at his command. Joseph Taylor’s matching amatory song, ‘Gipsy’s Wedding Day’, shows in ‘mun [must] put them to one side’, a lone example of a non-standard form, while Walter Pardon’s ‘Sweet Dundee’ is bereft of lexical and grammatical aberrance though suffused with Norfolk vowel sounds. In ‘The Golden Glove’, Frank Hinchliffe’s ‘wheer’ for ‘where’ and ‘theer’ for ‘there’ together with his short /u/ are almost all we get to remind us that his speechways are drawn from the moorland villages to the west of Sheffield.

The items sung by the four featured men concerning sport or a sporting event, here classified as sporting songs, may have been expected to produce a richer yield of dialectal material, since the events depicted could be seen to be embedded in a context local for each singer, where the event, landscape, landmarks and companions stimulated the use of local speech forms. Jack Beeforth’s ‘Last Valentine’s Day’, however, gives no firmer examples of local usages than he showed in his amatory song, which are, in this song, chiefly from vowel sounds: ‘meer’ for ‘more’, ‘surelie’ for ‘surely’. Similarly, in Joseph Taylor’s sporting song, ‘The White Hare’, we hear ‘theer’ for ‘there’, ‘bate’ for ‘beat’ and ‘nivver’ for ‘never’. Walter Pardon’s ‘The Huntsman’ shows vowel sounds which could be no other than from

³ Cecil J. Sharp, *English County Folk Songs* [1908-1912] (London: Novello, 1961), Preface.

Norfolk, but English speakers from outside East Anglia would have no trouble in understanding the song's sentiments. In the sporting 'Scales and Springs' it is Frank Hinchliffe's apparent weak textual comprehension rather than dialectally-induced opacity which obscures the song's narrative, where 'River Derwent' comes across as 'River Darren' in the only example in this song of clear local word use.

Songs of work would seem to give opportunities to singers to bring into play the many technical and local terms used, for example, to describe the parts of a plough and the ploughing operation. Jack Beeforth, however, seemed happy to sing 'All Jolly Fellows' in a version similar to that sung by countless others, with almost no crafting of the words to make them sound as though they had some local or personal inspiration which would bring to this song a note of realism. Joseph Taylor did not offer this song and the replacement song of work selected showed small phonetic variation from the standard English, whilst Walter Pardon and Frank Hinchliffe included almost no dialectal material in their versions of 'All Jolly Fellows'. Their tenuous encounters with a ploughman's life (Walter being a carpenter and Frank a dairy farmer) would have precluded their bringing any personal lived experiences, and perhaps intimate expression to this song, though Jack Beeforth – a skilled ploughman – sang it with similar dialectal blandness. The foregoing appears to show that these singers may not have regarded the classes of song we have so far discussed as being peculiarly local to them – not 'Yorkshire' or 'Lincolnshire' or 'Norfolk' – and the songs are not therefore to be dressed in local vernacular clothing, though often the action and sentiments in them may seem to emerge from vicinal landscapes and experiences.

The sentimental songs featured here – songs evoking sympathy and pity, songs of separation of lovers and of death – are handled by each singer with earnestness and compassion, with once again a scant use of dialectal colour, and sung here with an absence of cynicism and caricature. The Beeforth and Hinchliffe sentimental songs share the results of

these singers' propensity to omit the aspirate and for the former singer to add an aspirate for emphasis where none is normally sounded. These figures and Joseph Taylor's 'marbil' for 'marble' in his 'Died for Love' represent the only significant dialectal elements in these four sentimental songs. A. E. Green in his study 'Folk-Song and Dialect' argued that increasing literacy, print, and the use of the vernacular in documents, and the chief exponents of the oral song tradition moving increasingly further afield had led, in England, to the dissemination of a non-dialectal language in song. Green concluded: 'The answer to the question, Why is folk-song not in dialect? then being simply that it would be surprising if it were'.⁴

Percy Grainger noted the use of local phonology by his informants and observed that in 'folk-song singing' singers were 'not inclined to introduce local dialect phrases into their songs ... It is a case of dialect pronunciation of ordinary English phrases, seldom more.'⁵ The analysis of these songs seems to corroborate the conclusions drawn by Green and Grainger: that vernacular singers of whom these four men are examples, do not depart substantially from standard English forms when singing their songs. Moreover, the dialectal treatment of their songs by these singers shows no significant differences in the extent and intensity of the dialectal palette between the different song types performed (amatory; sporting; working; sentimental). This may not be true of comic songs, for in this song-type Jack Beeforth does invest the text with many dialectal elements of typical north Yorkshire phonetics, lexicon and grammar which he used in everyday speech.

Caution, then, should be shown when drawing any general conclusions about use of dialect from this study. The regional deployment of these four singers down the eastern side of England shows them in a milieu which may be seen, in important ways, to be a geographical, economic, cultural and phonic continuum containing no major topographical, ethnic or language discontinuities. In such an arena, it would be expected that the songs'

⁴ A. E. Green, 'Folk -Song and Dialect', 41.

⁵ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 160.

incremental but constant movement between singers within the region would tend to moderate any dialectal idiosyncrasies.

Finally, the importance of mediation in the process of recording a song in a setting shorn of its customary context should not be underestimated. Percy Grainger and the other chroniclers of the songs appearing here were keen, no doubt, to convey to their informants their interest in local speech forms as well as in text and tunes. A singer in front of a microphone, however, may be applying a self-induced softening of, and (as he may have seen it) an improvement on, his normal spoken pronunciation, out of a desire to appear at his best. After all, this was a process that was to produce a permanent record.

2 Use of rhythm

The monophonic, acoustic, vernacular singers discussed here must call upon their own internal musical resources to produce a pleasing performance of both narrative and musical integrity. One of the most important skills such singers often display is the introduction of irregularities in pace, pauses, stress and rhythm whilst maintaining a rhythmic flow throughout the song. Percy Grainger noted examples of this when recording his Lincolnshire singers in the first decade of the twentieth century:

Many singers seem to have a feeling for rhythmic continuity between one verse and another. Those who evince this sense at all often present, if anything, a more consistent continuity between verses than between half verses. Often a tune, otherwise preponderantly regular, will have rhythmically irregular, though uniformly recurring, pauses between its verses and half verses. This linking together of the repetitions of tunes, as well as the halves of tunes, into an unbroken rhythmic flow embracing the full length of each song, bespeaks some sense for a closely-knit formal whole, and seems to me a distinct advance upon mere repetitions of a tune with random gaps in between.⁶

Jack Beeforth demonstrated the ‘feeling for rhythmic continuity’ in his four songs, handling the varying problems thrown up by the songs’ different requirements. Putting to one side Jack’s sometimes involuntary additional breaths caused by incapacity, each song is

⁶ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 155.

impregnated to a larger or lesser extent with rubato, Jack anticipating or retarding the regularity of the pulse of the song without losing the innate rhythm. In the amatory 'Sweet Dundee' Jack's extra syllables extending the prosodic metre of the text are sometimes at the root of this, as are, in the sporting 'Last Valentine's Day', the exigencies of certain prolonged words in the chorus of this otherwise essentially rhythmic song. In 'Last Valentine's Day', again, a marked syllabic staccato pervades the singing investing the piece with an interrupted gait, but nevertheless the pulse seems to suggest that the singer really knew what rhythms were involved in riding to hounds.

In the song of work, 'All Jolly Fellows', the introduction of yet another additional syllable indicates that these occurrences are not mistakes, but are planned by the singer to add deeper meaning to the text, as are, in the same song, delicate shifts in stress in some of the lines. It is in the sentimental 'Go and Leave Me' that Jack's treatment of rhythm is heard at its freest, so that it is difficult truly to locate the song's metre. Many of the devices the singer commonly uses to add variety, interest, intensity and atmosphere are employed here: speeding up, slowing down, pausing with extra emphasis being added by one of Jack's favourite figures, the staccato separation of text. It is clear that Jack Beeforth brought a richer array of rhythmic colouring to the singing of the sentimental class of song than to any other.

Joseph Taylor's sentimental 'Died for Love' however, shows little metric irregularity but depends for the infusion of pathos and pity on the singer's vocal tone, articulation and ornamentation. It is possible that Joseph's choral training had disciplined him to sing within a literal rhythmic orthodoxy for in his amatory 'Gipsy's Wedding Day' and his sporting song, 'The White Hare', few deviations from the songs' metric conventionality are heard. That is not to say that this singer could not sing freely, for in his 'Rufford Park Poachers' (set against the other singers' song of work) many rhythmic changes occur in verse one, and there is a mingling of staccato and legato phrases throughout the song.

Walter Pardon's 'Walterising' of songs has been referred to earlier in the study, the expression referring to this singer's moulding and incorporation, over the years when he sang only to himself, of idiosyncratic variants of texts and melodies. In imparting the flavours of his own aesthetics to his songs, Walter often echoes the stresses and cadences of his Norfolk speech patterns, in this process subverting some of the metric ascriptions to his songs. More than any of the other singers here, Walter Pardon is heard to employ mannered patterns of breathing in his phrasing, and while this most often introduces an interesting element of rubato to the piece, its use in the sentimental 'If I Were a Blackbird' gives a leaden predictability to the song. This seems not to be typical of a Walter Pardon treatment since we hear him elsewhere as one who is skilled at bending, but not breaking, a song's rhythm.

Delicate rubato is heard in all of Frank Hinchliffe's songs here considered – 'delicate' is appropriate to many of this singer's qualities for he appears in his singing to be so gentle a man. The freely delivered sporting song, 'In Forging of My Scales and Springs', suffers from being poorly recorded but it is possible still to hear the unfettered tempo, the rubato and well phrased structure in the opaque text, its often incoherent narrative brought about by the singer's original misunderstanding of the words or by memory loss. Ian Russell has referred to this singer's style in which he treats alike all the songs in his repertoire making no concession to any in terms of tone production, rhythmic variation and ornamentation,⁷ and there is nothing in the four songs we have heard here to challenge this conclusion.

3 Use of ornamentation

Frank's figures of ornamentation consist of often almost imperceptible anticipating vaults and slides delivered in a thin, passionless tonality, which is particularly inappropriate in the amatory song 'The Golden Glove' where the soft vibrato often fades into a croon. The frugality of the 'grain' of Frank's voice is one of the defining features of any song he sings,

⁷ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-72*, 80.

as is the lack of vocal virility and vitality exemplified in the song of work, ‘All Jolly Fellows’. One may conclude from the four songs heard from Frank Hinchliffe that the sentimental ‘The Gypsy’s Warning’ might be the ideal, but also the sole, vehicle to display Frank’s vocal credentials, his sincerity, simplicity, tone and articulation. Joseph Taylor, on the other hand, has techniques which carry across all the songs he has sung for this study. The two singers may similarly pitch their songs but there is a mature resonance in Joseph’s rich vibrato not heard from the other singer.

Although melisma is never totally absent from the performances of the four singers (indeed Joseph Taylor often parades it in his ornamentation), they all seem to prefer syllabic word-setting in the songs that appear here. Moreover, each singer is heard to adopt a different strategy to achieve his purpose. Jack Beeforth’s interjections ‘Oh’ and ‘Aye’ and inserted words such as ‘Now’ and ‘And’ serve multiple ends since they find use as intensifiers, bridging devices at the beginning of lines as well as scansion tools. The text for Jack’s amatory song ‘Go and Leave Me’ is unique in his four songs for it does not need so enhancing.

Elsewhere, though the past tense ‘èd’ stressed ending is frequently brought into play, Jack Beeforth displays none of the meaningless syllables, the epenthetic, written of by Sharp and Grainger. This feature, though, is prevalent in Joseph Taylor’s singing and is also heard in that of Joseph’s North Lincolnshire contemporaries recorded by Percy Grainger. This curious and pleasing sound appears not as two separated syllables but as a single adenoidal glide and is often almost imperceptible; its apparent wide use was not passed down to later singers – it was unknown to the other three featured in this study – although some revival singers of the 1960s, notably Martin Carthy, have incorporated it into their vocal technique.

A similar figure was commonplace in late nineteenth-century music hall performance where, for example, in the anonymous and popular ‘Villikins and his Dinah’, words like

‘husband’, ‘gallant’ and ‘parent’ were frequently awarded an additional syllable to become ‘husiband’, ‘galliant’ and ‘parient’.⁸ Music hall performers may have adopted this from general lower class speechways and intensified its use when wanting to take the part of (in this case) a cockney raconteur. It is just as likely that the usage originated in the music hall and has found its way into other strands of popular culture.

Walter Pardon follows neither Jack Beeforth nor Joseph Taylor in his melisma-avoiding strategies, achieving his desired wordsetting by altering stress and rhythms, sometimes simply by eliminating an anacrusis or by subtly and briefly interrupting the song’s rhythmic flow, particularly in the amatory ‘Sweet Dundee’ and the sporting ‘The Huntsman’. Once again the accents and cadences of the spoken local dialectal features are here mirrored in these songs, making them both natural and native. It is only in the mannered phrasing of the sentimental ‘If I Were a Blackbird’ that Walter’s singular treatment of rhythm is not in evidence. Frank Hinchliffe’s amatory ‘The Golden Glove’ is abundantly melismatic; the singer is apparently comfortable with the arrangement of some syllables carrying over to a second note which occurs four times in verse one alone and which does not sound bathetic or disappointing. Frank’s three other songs are already overwhelmingly syllabically structured in simple orthography, ‘nemberly’ for ‘nimble’ in the song of work ‘All Jolly Fellows’ being an exception for this singer, though the device is found in profusion in the singing of Joseph Taylor.

The inventiveness of the Taylor ornamentation surpasses that of all the other three singers. Jack Beeforth has falling and upward glides and a half-uttered ‘yelp’ in the sporting song ‘Last Valentine’s Day’, and many moaning slides in the sentimental ‘Go and Leave Me’ but nothing so rich as, for example, Joseph Taylor’s mordents and sliding expressive figures in the amatory ‘Gipsy’s Wedding Day’. The last-note parlando-like dying fall heard in three of Walter Pardon’s songs does not argue that it is characteristic of his usual singing style but its

⁸ Peter Davison (ed.), *Songs of the British Music Hall* (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), 21; 188.

occasional appearance here is curious, for he seldom uses a recitative mode elsewhere. Walter's sparse armoury of embellishment is completed with modest figures in the form of anticipatory sliding or leaning into a note from above or below, heard in most clearly in the song of work 'All Jolly Fellows'.

The abundance and intensity of Joseph Taylor's use of ornamentation in songs contrasts, then, with its relative paucity in the songs of the other three, later, singers. Why this should be so is obscure. Joseph Taylor's command of ornamentation may not have been unique even in his own area of North Lincolnshire, for another of Percy Grainger's recorded singers there, Joseph Leaning, has left behind some convincing evidence of his own abilities in embellishing his songs. Bob Thomson writes of Joseph Leaning, a farm labourer who was 68 when Grainger first recorded him in 1906: 'There is ... a wonderful demonstration on one recording made in 1906 of Mr Leaning illustrating by example the way in which a tune, 'Green Bushes', could be varied melodically without breaking up its basic contour'.⁹ This same recording also demonstrates the singer's skill in rich ornamentation and wordsetting by the incorporation of syllabic additions common in Joseph Taylor's singing.

Skill in the decorative treatment of a melody line in this genre of song was clearly passed on to another generation, for Joseph Taylor's son John and daughter Mary were recorded in 1944 and 1953 respectively singing versions of Joseph's 'Brigg Fair', which contain many stylistic echoes of their father's singing.¹⁰ Filial loyalty to paternal cultural mores does not always persist but in the Taylor case Joseph also bequeathed to his children a tradition of church-going and choir-membership, and this may have reinforced John's and Mary's attachment to the singing and treatment of their father's songs.

⁹ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

¹⁰ Peter Kennedy (ed.), *Joseph Taylor & Family* (Gloucester: Folktrax FTX135, 1979), liner notes, n.p.

4 Use of voice

A further reference is made here to the participation in liturgical and devotional singing of vernacular singers, and the possible influence such ecclesiastical forms have had on their secular music. It has earlier been argued that Joseph Taylor's singing style may have received some inspiration from church ceremonial forms, that some elements of his idiosyncratic voice tone and stylistic figures may have silently, or consciously, found their way into his singing, and for one of Joseph's North Lincolnshire contemporaries, George Wray – a successful self-made carrier – such influences were clearly regarded as pernicious.

Percy Grainger has told us: 'Mr Wray held that folksinging had been destroyed by the habit of singing in church and chapel choirs, and used to wax hot on this subject, and on the evils resultant upon singing to the accompaniment of the piano'.¹¹ Did Mr Wray's rant mean that the 'habit' of singing in church and chapel choirs had displaced the whole genre of folksinging which had now come to an end, or that the disciplines of choral singing had in important ways enervated the manner in which folk songs were now being performed? George Wray was himself recorded by Grainger in 1908¹² and is heard to be a singer who used none of the forms of decoration common to Joseph Taylor, but to have a distinctive, almost recitative style of performance; Grainger characterises George's singing as being in a 'low voice mainly for pattering, bubbling, jerky, restless, and briskly energetic effects ... [and] high long held notes'.¹³ A discourse between George Wray and Joseph Taylor on the influence of worship on vernacular singing may have been interesting to observe.

These four men are all heard to have voices which may be termed light tenor (with Jack Beeforth's heavier voice sometimes at the lower end of this description) though all displaying different qualities of voice texture as has been described in the foregoing discussion. The hesitancy and withdrawal in Frank Hinchliffe's singing is frequently evident,

¹¹ Percy Grainger, *Program-Note on 'Lincolnshire Posy'*.

¹² Peter Kennedy, *Joseph Taylor & Family*, liner notes, n.p.

¹³ Percy Grainger, 'Collecting with the Phonograph', 166.

this apparent lack of conviction heard in the absence of differentiation in treatment between the types of song. Frank's coyness – he would often 'sidestep the opportunity to perform in public'¹⁴ – suggests an absence of self-belief, a vulnerability and insecurity which invests each of the songs he sings here with an evident lack of authority. The languidness of Frank's style of singing on his own may not be the same as a more forthright style he would bring to the communal performance of the Sheffield carols.

5 Truth in vernacular song

Jack Beeforth claimed a 'truth' for this song or that throughout the recordings, and similar assertions have been noted by many fieldworkers. Cecil Sharp said of the 'peasant' singer: 'To him there is no tale like a true tale; and to heighten the sense of reality, he will often lay the scene of his story in his own locality'.¹⁵ It was the absence of a literary tradition in a rural society, wrote Herbert Halpert, that an oral culture came to depend on hearsay evidence for information to be preserved and transmitted. Further, Halpert's informants drew heavily on analogy, citing recent songs – the historicity of which could be verified – as proof that the claims of older songs as factual could be relied upon. This was especially so when old people were involved, for they were the chief repositories of all oral knowledge.¹⁶ In his functional study of the Anglo-Irish ballad 'McCaffery', A. E. Green suggested that 'this ballad potentially functions as "truth" on two levels; the first, that of an historically accurate narrative; the second, that of a moral statement with application to the experience of particular singers and probably of particular descent groups'.¹⁷ However, John Ashton, believing that the idea of truth in song is a more complex concept, rejects such a two-dimensional model:

¹⁴ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-72*, 86.

¹⁵ Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*, 93.

¹⁶ Herbert Halpert, 'Introductory essay'. J. H. Cox, *Traditional Ballads and Folk-Songs Mainly from West Virginia*. G. Hertzog et. al. (eds) (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964), xvii-xviii.

¹⁷ A. E. Green, 'McCaffery: A study in the variation and function of a ballad', 10.

I believe that the term ‘truth’ is eminently flexible and that a song need not necessarily be documentary or ethical in its application to be considered true. In fact, a singer may perceive truth throughout his entire repertoire, basing this perception in part upon the fact that some of his songs will simply ‘ring’ true by incorporating elements which symbolise his life experience or typify his culture.¹⁸

Many of Joseph Taylor’s songs were strewn with allusions to real places, or with references to actual events, for example, ‘Brigg Fair’, ‘Horkstow Grange’, ‘Yarborough Hunt’, ‘Maria Martin’, ‘Worcester City’. For ‘Rufford Park Poachers’, Percy Grainger wrote: Mr. Taylor says the song is founded on fact’.¹⁹ Apart from ‘Rufford Park Poachers’, authenticity for Joseph’s repertoire is evinced by implication, as in John Ashton’s account above, through the whole of his corpus.

Mike Yates knew Walter Pardon well, and he offered a telling insight into Walter’s belief in the essential truth in the songs he sang:

Walter may not have known Barbara Allen or Lord Lovel personally, but I am sure that he believed them to have been real people, possibly as real as were his rural neighbours ... The rose and briar *motif* ... [were] an expression of how the world could be, and indeed, how it should be.²⁰

In the repertoire of Frank Hinchliffe, ‘truth’ is reflected from the songs he chose to sing. Many of them are moralising and poignant, for example, ‘The Blind Boy’, ‘I’m a Man that’s Done Wrong to My Parents’, ‘Kitty Wells’, ‘The Letter Edged in Black’. It is curious that the only song for which Frank could confidently claim authenticity – his own composition, ‘Frank’s Song’, about a neighbour, Steve Fox – was held to be too near the truth to please the audience for which it was intended.

Truth in song is plainly something beyond being a claim for a literal accuracy. Singers asserting authenticity for songs, either implicitly or overtly, occupy an enhanced level of

¹⁸ John Ashton, ‘Truth in Folksong: Some Developments and Applications’, *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* (1977), 2. <http://cjtm.icaap.org/content/5/v5art4.html>. [accessed 16.07.2005].

¹⁹ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, 187.

²⁰ Mike Yates, *Put a Bit of Powder on it, Father*, booklet, 7.

metaphorical and psychological reality. It is not that these events actually occurred, but that something like them did happen, or at least could have, or should have, happened.

In exploring Jack Beeforth's apparent attachment to the idea of truth in his songs, it is clear that fiction did not sit well with him. To many men of his class, and his generation, fiction was regarded as a luxury, as a rather unmanly frill on an active life. Similar class and gender attitudes have carried over into contemporary practices, where, for example, many of these men read only non-fiction literature, as if invented stories somehow do not meet the needs of their manly self-perception. That some of the readership of 'action', fantasy and science-fiction categories of novel is drawn from this class of reader, emphasises the point made here, for this type of novel is usually based around active and heroic archetypes.

The author, Ian McEwan, has strong anecdotal evidence of a gender difference in esteem for fictional forms of expression. When McEwan was attempting to give away 30 novels, among London office workers during their lunchtime picnics, women eagerly accepted a book, but only one was taken by a man. Most men 'frowned in suspicion or distaste ... "Nah, nah. Not for me. Thanks mate, but no" ... Reading groups, readings, breakdowns of book sales all tell the same story: when women stop reading, the novel will be dead'.²¹

Many of Jack Beeforth's songs, and those of the other singers featured in this study, have gentle, passive and reflective themes. It is in these songs in particular, that men like Jack have been able to claim a greater status, as 'reporters' of these events, not having to regard themselves as, merely, inventors or carriers of fiction. Such an objective perspective, moreover, would have allayed the awkwardness, and self-consciousness, a man might have felt about performing songs with emotional and sentimental themes, a preponderant part of many vernacular repertoires. Important psychological encouragement has, therefore, fallen to singers through their claims of a 'truth' in their songs; it is not surprising that assertions for such truth has been a recurring theme in the accounts of this genre.

²¹ Ian McEwan, 'Hello, would you like a free book?' *The Guardian*, G2, 20 September 2005.

6 Commonality and diversity

The body of evidence flowing from the analysis of the four featured men's narratives, and from their singing, shows important similarities as well as differences between them. The commonalities in the social location of these men – positioned somewhere between the labouring and yeoman classes – has been described in Chapters 6 and 7. A. L. Lloyd's experience showed that 'as elsewhere, the most inventive bearers of English folk songs are likely to be the liveliest-minded, best-informed of their community, but among the poorest'.²² This description fits well with these creative men, only Joseph Taylor in relatively secure employment, escaping the economic rigours of the English rural economy, in the first half of the twentieth century. For most of their lives they had all lived in a narrowly defined setting both socially and geographically, until they had, to a greater or lesser extent, been taken up by one of the two Folk Revivals. The country locations of these men, and the times in which they lived, made it almost inevitable that they had all found their employment in an agricultural milieu, and all these factors deeply affected their choices of songs.

Most of these songs appear to have come to them aurally, for there is little evidence that written sources featured directly in their learning of these repertoires. Jack Beeforth learned none of his songs from print. Joseph Taylor had his songs from others' singing, and it was not until near the end of his life that he had access to limited printed and manuscript sources, largely thanks to his daughter Annie Allen's correspondence with Percy Grainger.²³ It has been shown that Walter Pardon was an avid reader, but he had taken his wide repertoire not from print, but from hearing them sung, using contemporary sources only, it has been suggested, 'to eke out words half-known or half-forgotten'.²⁴ For example, Walter remembered three songs of the 26 included in an undated *National Agricultural Labourers'*

²² A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, 22.

²³ Ruairidh Greig, 'Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire: a biography of a singer', 388.

²⁴ Roly Brown, Review, *Musical Traditions Online*. [accessed 28.04.03].

and Rural Workers' Union Song Book (c.1906), a copy of which was owned by Uncle Billy.²⁵ Ian Russell wrote that 'virtually all of Frank's [Hinchliffe's] songs have been learned from other singers', noting that only 'The Letter Edged in Black' was taken from a gramophone record.²⁶ Three fragments, all of them hunting songs had been written out for Frank by unnamed correspondents.²⁷

Similarities, therefore, are evident in the routes, oral and aural, through which these four singers acquired their songs. However, important differences are revealed in the immediate sources themselves, for although much of the collective repertoires was nurtured in the singers' families, the degree to which the four singers learned songs from within the family, and from external sources, varied significantly. Walter Pardon, who did not sing outside his home until well into middle age, had almost all of his songs from his uncle, Billy Gee. On the other hand, evidence suggests that Joseph Taylor had no internal family sources for his recorded repertoire. The two other men of these four, Jack Beeforth and Frank Hinchliffe, were both regular customers at their local pubs and other singing venues, and their repertoires include items taken both from their families and from fellow singers. It may have been family influence, as well as personal taste, that allowed Jack to include several bawdy songs in his repertoire, and Frank none.

Their families may not have been the source of all these singers' repertoires, but a real sense of the importance of singing in the home emerges from all their narratives. Jack Beeforth claimed that all in his family were good singers. They certainly seemed to have internalised most of Jack's songs, for in 2005 his daughter Ethel (now aged 85), granddaughter Gail (53) and grandson Michael (56), were able to complete the texts of those

²⁵ Mike Yates, 'Stand Up Ye Men of Labour. The Socio-Political Songs of Walter Pardon'. *Musical Traditions* No. 1 (1983), 24.

²⁶ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*, 74.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 225-7.

songs which had been left unfinished, during the original Beeforth recordings, in 1974.²⁸
(These small textual completions are shown where appropriate in Volume II.)

Singing within his household did not feature in contemporary accounts of Joseph Taylor's life. It was not until later research by Ruairidh Greig, that an abundantly musical story unfolded. 'Saxby All Saints was a musical village ... [Joseph's] children James, John, Annie and Mary Ann were all singers'.²⁹ Their music, however, was clearly of a different genre from that which made Joseph famous.

At the [North Lincolnshire Music] Festivals prior to 1905, the Taylor family had competed in a number of sections. In 1904, for example, John won the tenor solo section with the song 'Come Ye Children', and Annie and Mary Ann, with Miss Ashton, came second in the female voice trio with 'Queen of Fresh Flowers'.³⁰

Singing was a central activity in the Pardon home, for Walter's mother, Emily (née Gee), came from a large singing family. The tacit allocation of song to singer operating here, forced Walter to wait until well into maturity, before finding his own space for performing all the songs he had memorised over the years. The Hinchliffe household, complete with its harmonium, was one in which singing was also a regular feature, and where Frank learned all the songs of his parents by the time he was 18, after which he was able to extend his experience of singing into the local pubs.

Whilst singing within the family and at home was a common thread linking these four men, different perspectives are seen from the range of venues and occasions where, and when, each of them commonly performed. For Jack Beeforth, these included not only his three local pubs, but almost anywhere in his locale where singing was customary and opportunities for performance could be negotiated. Similarly, for Frank Hinchliffe, his favourite singing pubs provided him with a welcoming ambience, and regular opportunities to meet his fellows and to perform. Joseph Taylor, however, was not eager to sing away from

²⁸ Notes on conversation: Ethel Pearson, Gail Agar and Michael Beeforth, Ravenscar, 6 September 2005.

²⁹ Ruairidh Greig, 'Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire: a biography of a singer', 388.

³⁰ Ibid.

his home, except as part of his religious devotional obligations. According to his granddaughter, Marion Hudson, her grandfather had to be persuaded to enter the 1905 North Lincolnshire Music Festival competition:

No compliment had any affect [sic] and Granpa was adamant – he wasn't a public singer, he only sang because he wished to. Lady Elwes and her brother cycled from Brigg many times and at last, to please *her*, much against his inclination, he at last, consented.³¹

Joseph's reluctance to perform for the first Folk Song Revivalists was echoed by the unwillingness of Walter Pardon to sing away from his home, until his late recognition by the second Folk Song Revival.

7 Anatomy of a 'tradition'?

This analysis of the four men in this study reveals as many differences as similarities; as much separates the men's narratives and singing as links them. The speculation might be contemplated, therefore, that there is too little accord in the discourse here to recognise the four men as inhabiting, what could be usefully termed, a 'tradition'.

Nevertheless, arising out of the analysis in Part Two of this thesis, there has formed a cluster of characteristics appropriate to men such as these, and to the songs they sang. These characteristics, descriptive rather than defining, argue persuasively in favour of the vernacular music, discussed in this thesis, as having been a distinctive, casual and informal, musical genre; that these singers have chosen to sing a certain type of song, and not another; that these same singers have recognised some measure of continuity in their singing; that the singers, and the songs, have been regarded as part of a process of tradition.

Firstly, the genre has been pervasive. Its attraction for many has been its wide availability, and the capacity for its songs to be performed in a broad variety of situations and venues, including, importantly, the home. The genre has been social and participatory, as well as bearing the potential to be individual, solo and separate. Moreover, the mode of song

³¹ Ruairidh Greig, 'Joseph Taylor from Lincolnshire: a biography of a singer', 388.

transference has depended on memory, not on literacy, or on musical training. The singing of vernacular songs has appealed to introverted and private personalities, such as Frank Hinchliffe; it has also been attractive to outgoing and convivial characters, such as Jack Beeforth.

Further, the melodic lines of songs have not usually depended on implied harmonies, or on instrumental accompaniment, and the music has been acoustically delivered. Performers of vernacular songs have demonstrated a preference for an old repertoire, often describing new songs as having 'no meaning', and the sources of preferred repertoires have been eclectic, rather than exclusive. Singers in the vernacular genre have shown a preference for a non-demonstrative style of performance. Finally, the genre has been seen to be something other than community singing. Performers have not normally wished others to join in the whole song, but only, sometimes, in the chorus.

The arguments developed here relate to the four men featured in the study, and not to later generations of singers, in the distinctively altered cultural landscape of the second half of the twentieth century. The cultural lives of these four singers evolved when ideas, modes and attitudes owed much to Victorian mores. The range of songs, singing and performance styles, afforded to those who were exposed to only a small coterie of family and friends, gave the music a conservative tendency. This quality has been highly thought of, and much looked for, by generations of collectors. It has also stimulated the idea that the singers and songs have been part of a continuum of 'tradition', through 'a perception of continuity with the past, expressed through the singing of the same songs, and ... the possibility of an affective engagement, albeit across time and space, with the people who sang them in the past'.³²

The four singers discussed were working men whose fortunes had seen two of them, Jack

³² David Atkinson, 'Revival: genuine or spurious'. I. Russell and D. Atkinson (eds), *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 2004), 155.

Beeforth and Frank Hinchliffe, oscillating between positions of employer and labourer, had seen Walter Pardon's one-man business operations punctuated by periods of unemployment and military service, and had seen Joseph Taylor gradually rising to a management position of trust. Such men should not be regarded as bearers of some romantic, preternaturally noble characteristics which set them apart from their contemporaries. Nor should their singing necessarily be seen as pinnacles of the genre of music they had chosen to perform, for it will never be known how many other, perhaps more favoured, singers went unrecorded in the first and second Folk Song Revivals. For those who are unaccustomed to the informalities, and the sounds, and the rhythms of such men's singing, Sandy Ives gives a reminder of what the composer Charles Ives said about his father, a sometime choirmaster:

Once when Father was asked 'How can you stand it to hear old John Bell (who was the best stonemason in town) bellow off-key the way he does at camp-meetings?' his answer was 'Old John is a supreme musician. Look at his face and hear the music of the ages. Don't pay too much attention to the sounds. If you do you may miss the music. You won't get a heroic ride to heaven on pretty little sounds!'³³

³³ Edward D. Ives, *Drive Dull Care Away: Folksongs from Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown PEI: Institute of Island Studies, 1999), 20.

CONCLUSIONS

I: An epilogue for the song?

The epilogue for the folk, traditional element in the repertoires of singers like Jack Beeforth has often been written: ‘In a very few years all this heritage of traditional folk music will be gone’.¹ This sense of imminent loss hurried Baring-Gould and Ralph Vaughan Williams and others like them into their collecting campaigns: ‘But whatever is done in the way of preserving traditional music must be done quickly; it must be remembered the tunes, at all events, of true folk songs exist only by oral tradition, so that if they are not soon noted down and preserved they will be lost forever.’² More than half a century earlier the singularly prolix sub-title of John Broadwood’s *Old English Songs* explained that ‘*The Airs are set to Music exactly as they are now Sung, to rescue them from oblivion ...*’³

By 1932 Frank Howes was happy to be able to report, in his editorial for the first volume of the newly-amalgamated English Folk Dance and Song Society that the rescue work had been completed:

The primary work of both societies, which was to collect and conserve the remains of traditional song and dance has been, as far as we can see

¹ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, x.

² Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W. A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 70.

³ David Atkinson, *English Folk Song: an introductory bibliography based on the holdings of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* [1996] (London: EFDSS, 1999), 41.

accomplished – and accomplished with a measure of success that entitles us to a modest and, we hope legitimate pride ... The work of preservation will in fact be continued.⁴

The work of the industrious Roy Palmer, whose corpus extends to twenty seven entries in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library bibliography,⁵ has persuaded him that currents of now-sublimated eye-witness account, anecdote and ballad continue to bear the potential to re-emerge from the ‘subterranean stream’ of orality which carries them.⁶ Jack Beeforth’s positioning in Palmer’s oral subterranean stream is based on his own testimony but (were it not for this present work) the likelihood may be questioned of any future onward transmission from him except through his family. There are powerful influences which are set against it. The Vice President of the newly-formed Folk-Song Society at its first meeting in 1899 warned that:

There is an enemy at the doors of folk-music which is driving it out, namely, the common popular songs of the day... And this product it is which will drive out folk-music if we do not save it ... as soon as the little urchins of distant villages catch the sound of a music-hall tune, away goes the hope of troubling their heads with the old fashioned folk-songs.⁷

‘In manufacturing counties’, added Sabine Baring-Gould, ‘modern music has driven out the traditional folk melodies’.⁸ Parry might easily have had Jack Beeforth in mind for in a pub in a ‘distant village’ in 1900 Jack, aged nine, was making his singing debut performing one of the songs Parry would have reviled. In analysing Jack’s repertoire, moreover, it has been shown that a large proportion do not conform to a description of folk song that would have satisfied Parry or Baring-Gould. The Williams schema, discussed earlier, of the residual

⁴ Frank Howes, *JEFDS* 1:1 (1932), vii.

⁵ David Atkinson, *English Folk Song: an introductory bibliography*.

⁶ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History*, 1-3.

⁷ Sir Hubert Parry, *JFSS* 1:1 (1899), 1.

⁸ S. Baring-Gould, *Songs of the West*, x.

and the dominant in defining forms of existing, stable social relations interests and practices against those that are emergent or dynamic, is appropriate here.

This does not conclude that there is an inevitability about there being a temporally linear flow in shifts of cultural expression with the new always taking over from the existing and the old discarded. However, as has been shown, such a movement was operating and intensifying during the nineteenth, and early twentieth, century; improvements in printing and sound recording technologies, and better systems for moving goods and entertainers, gave the music industry more comprehensive and quicker access to even the remotest part of England. The developments were immense but still quantitative in scale: in rural parts, even the most successful artist would play to only a few hundred people at a time; sheet music and gramophone records might have been played to members of a family or to a few score people at a dance in a village hall. It was not until the 1920s that radio broadcasting introduced a fundamental and qualitative change in the deployment of cultural expression which was now mass in scale and simultaneous in operation. For Jack Beeforth and his family this change took place in 1937 (Jack was forty six) when they first acquired a wireless receiver, but by then his own repertoire had been established.

Those vernacular acoustic singers born after Jack Beeforth's generation do not now inhabit a universe where cultural exchange in song takes place by choice only once or twice a week at the pub among a coterie of the same cronies, or every now and then at some other celebratory event. Singers who style themselves as being within the folk tradition survive, but their musical tastes and repertory will have been informed from a deeper stream and across a wider spectrum of genres beyond Jack Beeforth's experience while his choice was limited to what could be picked up in his own locale. Moreover, Jack did not understand, or relate to, the concept of folk song or any other classification.

Baring-Gould, Vaughan Williams, Hubert Parry and their fellows are likely to have seen Jack as a folk singer whose tastes had been sullied by the wares of modernism. This study has, to the contrary, shown him to be an entertainer in the popular idiom whose repertoire carried a substantial amount of 'traditional' material, and Jack regarded himself as a singer who, knowing plenty of old songs, liked to entertain people with them. It is probable that Jack's songs, and those of many of his kindred contemporaries, will continue to have an existence for few of the songs are original to them, although they have produced many admirable new versions. The songs continue, and in this sense no era can be seen to have ended with Jack and his like. It is the songs' unique social and cultural deployment which is never likely to be seen again in the same way, and it is technology, one of the purported agents of these songs' demise, which, ironically, has helped to sustain them.

II: An epilogue for the singer?

Superficial features of this narrative argue that the song tradition of which Jack Beeforth was heir ruptured with his generation, and that singers of his genre have gone and their kind will not be seen again. The small-scale agricultural milieu in which Jack operated has all but disappeared and most of the venues where he sang no longer operate. Gone, too, is the available and willing circle of neighbours to act as audience, fellow entertainers and song-swappers, and an abundance of competing diversions is on offer. The mixture of songs from the varying musical 'traditions' of popular, hunting, broadside and folk are no longer universally current in everyday discourse as they were in Jack's youth. In singing, the single unadorned voice is seldom heard except within revivalist circles. While not promoting an absolute technological determinism here, one might compare Jack's own limited exposure to

culture-through-technology (from a gramophone at an occasional dance) to that of a singer of popular music of a later generation tapping into music ‘on phonogram, disc or tape and retrieved mechanically, digitally, electronically’ where it is ‘mobile across previous barriers of time and space; becom[ing] a commodity, a possession’;⁹ and then, of course, there is the karaoke machine.

Through this metamorphosis the contours of the earlier cultural mould persist, and the differences between Jack and a later singer are more apparent than real. Although the contemporary artist has a far more abundant repository to draw from than had Jack – now including what has come to be known as World Music – many of the strands have historical links back to Jack Beeforth and his kind and beyond:

Between recent types of popular music and historical traditions of popular, so-called folk, and even bourgeois music stretching back at least as far as the sixteenth century, there are innumerable links and parallels ... There is, evidently, a kind of subterranean stratum, in which the strengths of traditions and rearticulatory force applied to ‘extraneous’ materials impose major continuities.¹⁰

Jack’s ‘we made our own entertainment’ generation has been succeeded by those with no less resolve and artistic ability to take and interpret the music on offer with many choosing not to become (as the above aphorism accusingly implies) just passive consumers. Moreover, a parallel song-writing competence has developed, with artists performing their own work. This is a skill which was not evident from the repertoires of Jack and the other three vernacular singers discussed elsewhere in this study, where their sole textual input was sometimes to edit and personalise the lyric. Some contemporary popular musicians make a living from performing their music. For most others, however, the fulfilment offered by regular opportunities for indulging their creative impulses and their exhibitionism, and for

⁹ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 227.

¹⁰ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 117.

satisfying their social needs (as well as for making a little pocket money), has to be enough; so it was for Jack Beeforth, a modest actor in the continuum of popular entertainment.

The evidence adduced in this study, then, argues against Jack and his contemporaries marking the last of an era, for Jack's desire to learn and sing his songs continues to be widely shared by artists both with narrow and diverse perspectives of the popular cultural world they inhabit.

III: An epilogue for a tradition?

It has been earlier asserted that no epilogue can confidently be written for the song, or for the singer, in the vernacular arena considered in this thesis, for shadows of their earlier cultural images and processes evolve and endure. The accounts of the four singers participating in this study, however, indicate that another important strand in this discourse – the tradition itself – is, in an important way, coming to an end. David Atkinson, in summarising some approaches to the study of the concept of tradition, identifies in it a 'deeply paradoxical concept':

On the one hand, tradition comprises a canon of texts that provides a cultural identity for its practitioners largely as a consequence of its perceived continuity with the same texts and their practitioners in the past and/or in other places. On the other hand, tradition is inherently unstable across time, its constitution always changing to meet the circumstance and ideological requirements of the present.¹¹

Although these two definitions lie at opposite ends of the range of their possibilities, they are both embraced by the proposition argued here: that the tradition is coming to an end precisely because, as a tradition, it has become essentially, and irrevocably, self-reflexive.

The familiar 'decline and fall' model of the passing of folk tradition, sees a particular cohort of singers marking the final cadence in a tradition which has now gone forever. This

¹¹ David Atkinson, 'Revival: genuine or spurious?', 149.

process sees tradition being fractured by modern developments in technology and dissemination, where routes of traditional transmission, and the cultural artefacts themselves, are overwhelmed by the volume and ubiquity of music, now produced on an industrial scale. In the model proposed here, the quintessentially reflexive character of the tradition takes constant nourishment in what is now a perpetual revival. It has become impossible to conceive of singers like Jack Beeforth, and the three other singers in this study, continuing with their type of repertoire, sung in their kind of way, in the contexts within which they were immersed. Further, it has been noted elsewhere in this study, that Jack did not know of the different categories often allocated, by others, to individual songs and genres. He was not aware of the word ‘folk’ or ‘traditional’, as some others may have described parts of his repertoire. He was not able to identify a folk song, nor did he call himself a folk singer.

In relation to Walter Pardon’s awareness of the traditional status, there are opposed views from some who knew him well. He is said to have had ‘understanding of the different genres of song and their provenance [which] gave the lie to the all-too-popular myth of the “simple countryman” unable to distinguish between them’.¹² However, writing of the same singer, Roly Brown, a frequent commentator and reviewer in this field, concludes that ‘we can see that singers were taking from wherever they wished right through the supposed final flourish of the Revival, refusing to be categorised or limited or, more properly, unaware of any latent circumscription’.¹³

David Atkinson adduces ‘plenty of evidence for singers distinguishing the parts of their repertoires to which they accord “traditional” status’, although he importantly adds, ‘when singers used this terminology [old songs or “folk songs”] it may have come from contact

¹² Pat Mackenzie & Jim Carroll, *FMJ* 7:2 (1996), 265.

¹³ Roly Brown, Review, *Musical Traditions Online* [accessed 31.03.05].

with collectors'.¹⁴ The possibility which Atkinson here suggests might have been more firmly stated, for most of those evidenced by him: The Copper Family, Harry Cox, George Dunn, Danny Brazil, Cyril Poacher and the others were, to different degrees, celebrated by folk enthusiasts. Encounters with them carried an inevitable, though perhaps unconscious, exerting of cultural influence.

Jack Beeforth's comparative anonymity protected him from contact with the trickle of informed visitors, which a wider fame might have attracted, but for future singers like him, such cocooning will be impossible. The singing lives of current and future singers in this genre will have emerged, and will have been consolidated, entirely surrounded by the artefacts of revivalist folk traditions, and by the related genres of roots music, country music and World Music; these singers will be confident of their own position in relation to these and other musics, which Jack Beeforth was not.

Jack Beeforth, and vernacular singers of his generation, will be seen as the last who operated before the current Revival developed its reflexive and endlessly mutable nature, and before it began to shape an aware, informed and knowing stream of participants. In this important way Jack and his fellows can be seen to represent the last of a line, and to mark the end of a tradition.

IV: Singing styles

Joseph Taylor aside, the singing styles of the men featured in this study have not shown an abundance of ornament and decoration. Bob Thomson¹⁵ has censured 'commentators who

¹⁴ David Atkinson, 'Revival: genuine or spurious?', 149.

¹⁵ Bob Thomson, *Unto Brigg Fair*, liner notes, n.p.

would have us believe that English singers perform in a very flat and unornamented fashion', as he claimed that:

any one of a variety of styles would and could be used by those singers that had a sense and honest love for traditional performance coupled with an artistic awareness of the elements of style that were peculiarly identified to the genre of music we now call folk song.

Thomson goes on, contradictorily, to explain that six of the eight Lincolnshire singers recorded by Percy Grainger (that is, all except Joseph Taylor and George Wray) sang in a style 'that has few ornamental flourishes and where they do occur they are consistent, i.e. applied at the same point in a tune on every verse'. The unadorned mode of singing here was, Thomson suggested, picked up from Norfolk since some of the Lincolnshire performers 'had been in touch with singers in Norfolk or had themselves originated there'. Issues of cultural transference are important in the understanding of the transmission of vernacular song before the era of mass communication. If acculturation through assimilation, emulation and synthesis on contact with other relatively distant singers was important in the development of the plain Lincolnshire style, why did not similar forces operate to disseminate the local, more florid elements of Joseph Taylor's and George Wray's singing?

Those who knew them would not doubt Jack Beeforth's, Walter Pardon's and Frank Hinchliffe's 'sense and honest love for performance' prescribed by Thomson above, but whether they carried 'an artistic awareness of the elements of [folk] style' is more difficult to show. These three singers may have performed in ignorance of the elements of the ill-defined folk styles hinted at by Bob Thomson. It is more likely that the Beeforth, Pardon and Hinchliffe singing styles evince not disintegrating fragments of a previously rich singing culture now in decline, but exemplars of an identifiable plain style prevalent in performance

in the English vernacular tradition. In it Joseph Taylor and George Wray may be the exceptions.

V: Issues inviting further research

1 Vernacular repertoires

Important issues inviting further research emerge from this study. Firstly, through applying the idea of residual, dominant and emergent forms to the Beeforth repertoire, his body of songs has been shown to be overwhelmingly residual in character with most titles originating before Jack's own lifetime; many songs were from known composers. Time has permitted only brief reference to the repertoires of some other singers in this genre: Harry Cox, Frank Hinchliffe, George Maynard, Walter Pardon and Joseph Taylor. In these repertoires, varying mixes of the stable and the dynamic have been located, with the stable in each case being the more predominant. This, of course, was to be expected since these singers were selected from within a genre where the players are attached to old songs. Nevertheless, the question of how and why emergent elements sometimes penetrate the repertoires of some vernacular singers and not others, may have some wider cultural implications.

2 Cross-voicing

A second issue highlights the prevalence of cross-voicing in vernacular song. In an earlier chapter of this study, attention was focused on how the four men featured each interpreted a different text, there characterised as a 'sentimental song', and which embodied a clear female perspective: singing in the first person as a woman. It was shown there that such cross-voicing, not associated with impersonation, is not unusual in songs of this genre. Conventions in many other musical traditions may be different; one imagines the responses of audiences in country music, *lieder* or the different streams of pop hearing a song clearly

written for a woman but delivered by a man. 'Look at a song's lyrics on the page', invites Simon Frith; 'whose "voice" is there? Who's talking? ... The "voice" in the printed lyrics is ... articulated by the text itself, by a process that is both self-expressive and self-revealing, both declared openly and implied by the narrative.'¹⁶ This does not precisely address this case for in it the first person gender shift blurs, not enlightens, and leaves a conviction that 'to sing a lyric doesn't simplify the question of who is speaking to whom; it makes it more complicated'.¹⁷

The ease with which Jack Beeforth and his fellows slipped into a female persona is matched by many contemporary male 'folk' singers, as one visitor to a twenty-first-century folk club has noted. Michael Verriers in discussing some Brechtian aspects of performance has commented that 'the singing by men of songs in which the perspective is clearly female, or vice versa, is a neat and simple way for the singers to 'distance themselves from their characters rather than identify with them'.¹⁸ While Verriers' point may have resonances with current folk club practice, a wider study is needed here for the understanding of this phenomenon in its different temporal and cultural arenas.

3 Dialect in vernacular singing

A third issue is the place of dialect in vernacular singing. After concluding that English 'folk-song [is] not in dialect', A. E. Green goes on to allow that 'there are, however, certain genres in which the use of dialect lexical and grammatical forms can be seen, and they would need discussion ... I am thinking of the occupational songs of both agricultural and industrial

¹⁶ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites*, 183.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁸ Michael Verrier, 'Folk club or epic theatre: Brecht's influence on the performance of Ewan MacColl', I. Russell and D. Atkinson (eds), *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, 2004), 111-112.

workers’.¹⁹ Jack Beeforth, who spoke with a dialect of strong regional colouring, usually softened it when singing. In certain Beeforth songs, however – ‘Sedgefield Fair’ and ‘Willie Went to Westerdale’ for example – such modification of dialect is less apparent. These two items are not occupational songs but have texts which display certain comic and localised elements and Green’s thesis may hold more exceptions than he has identified.

Moreover, while Green has invoked historical and societal forces to explain the absence of dialect in ‘folk-song’, it may be that qualities inherent in the text and tune of the song itself actively promote it: ‘The linguistic stimulation of dialect text is a direct challenge to read aloud; and the melody forces the reader to become a singer in order to grasp the lyrical quality of what is on the page. Song, then is the ideal vehicle for *active English*’.²⁰ In the second Folk Song Revival, the ‘putting on’ of dialect in performance persists though it has become less prevalent. ‘One example in my neck of the woods was the fascination with Lancashire and Liverpool dialect singing. [Some] artists ... purveyed songs and poetry in “cod” dialects that insulated the listener from the present while also supplying a cloying romantic regret for the passing of a bygone era – a classic fabrication of “tradition”’.²¹

Sentiment may have been shifting away from such singing when Jack was performing although evidence from this thesis has shown a body of dialect song in his repertoire. The poverty of discourse in this potentially fertile area of study invites further research in the use of dialect for both previous generations of vernacular singers, for contemporary revival singers and for others.

¹⁹ A. E. Green, ‘Folk-Song and Dialect’, 41.

²⁰ Ian Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain*, 6.

²¹ Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 115.

4 Local social networks

A fourth area of potential further study is the place of local social networks in the lives of vernacular performers such as the men featured here. Jack Beeforth has in this study been shown to have been implicated in many networks, both informal and structured, which enriched his social and farming life. One such institution, the Manor of Fyling Court Leet, was seen to provide a useful service in managing certain aspects of common land use in the locality; the Alcester Court Leet in Warwickshire, on the other hand, appeared to be purely ceremonial in function albeit with charitable impulses. Those involved in these medieval foundations claim continuing utility for them:

At Laxton [Nottinghamshire] the most ancient cultivation system has been maintained, that of the Three Fields and of Open Fields, along with the administrative mechanism for it. It would be difficult to think of a stronger reason as to why a Court Leet should have transmitted its authority into the modern age: that of the continuing practical needs of a local agrarian economy ... the entry for Danby [a few kilometres from Jack Beeforth's Wragby Farm] shows how a Court Leet exists in its purest form in the guarding and maintenance of common rights and property in partnership with the great noble land owners.²²

A wider study of the forty eight English and Welsh Courts Leet would be a fertile area for developing the understanding of the cultural implications in the survival of these archaic institutions; the fashioning, for example, by Jack Beeforth and his fellows of a junket and singing occasion out of the annual rent day, independent of the land owners the Court Leet purported to represent.

²² Bryan W. Massey, *Courts Leet Directory and Year Book 2000*, xiv.

VI: A bigger picture

Detached as this study has been from any particular polemic in the discourse of contemporary study of vernacular song, it may be seen, nevertheless, to have covered extensive ground and addressed important issues in this debate. Dave Harker comments:

There is plenty of work waiting to be done, not only in relation to songs, singers and singing, but in the much wider field of the history of social life ...

My contention is that unless we can locate cultural products and practices in history, we can understand neither culture nor history ...

We need dozens of studies of singing and music-making on a regional basis, not in the antiquarian or the anthropological mode, or in the spirit of bourgeois empiricism ...²³

Dave Harker has been widely criticised for, among other things, his 'gross misrepresent[ation] and doctrinaire name-calling',²⁴ but he is right in recognising the gaps in evidence and commentary in the continuing dialogue about the vernacular milieu considered in this thesis.

In Jack Beeforth's region of North Yorkshire, such work has been carried out by, among others, Keith Sullivan,²⁵ Steve Gardham,²⁶ and M. & N. Hudleston.²⁷ This last work, whose protracted gestation of 50 years implies an unusual stamina on the part of its authors, has been held to display a 'disappointing lack of scholarship when it comes to the introduction and the notes'.²⁸ This view is unjust, for the work's subtitle 'The Yorkshire Musical Museum', acknowledges that the collectors, approaching the subject in Dave Harker's 'spirit

²³ Dave Harker, *Fake Song: The manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the present day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), 254-255.

²⁴ Leslie Shepard, 'Correspondence', *FSJ* 2:4 (1973), 318-9.

²⁵ K. F. Sullivan, *Popular Singing Tradition and Cultural Change in the old North Riding of Yorkshire* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1978).

²⁶ Steve Gardham's work in progress (personal communication 2005).

²⁷ M. & N. Hudleston, *Songs of the Ridings: The Yorkshire Musical Museum* (Scarborough: Pindar, 2001).

²⁸ Michael Yates, *FSJ* 8:4 (2004), 533.

of bourgeois empiricism', had in any case little more than an antiquarian interest in, and intent towards, it. In a wider arena and at a more elevated level of scholarship, studies of singers and their songs have been produced from work carried out, for example, in West Sheffield,²⁹ Lincolnshire³⁰ and East Suffolk (two separate studies).^{31 32} One of these last studies developed into a Croom Helm title, *The Fellowship of Song*.³³

In the past twenty years a limited number of monographs have been produced from synchronic studies of vernacular singers in England. However, David Atkinson in his bibliography of the contents of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library has complained that 'the post-war [World War 2] period has seen more information published about singers, but even so there are still few substantial accounts'.³⁴

Since World War 2 scholarship has attempted to develop the study of 'folk song' from a position where the intent was to collect and preserve selected cultural items, shifting through to a more contextualised paradigm and finally to a position where the concern is an understanding of music as culture through personal embedment in the society under scrutiny. In this study of Jack Beeforth, opportunities to conduct the third movement in this development were lacking because of the historical positioning of the material. However, recent ethnomusicology's seemingly obsessive desire to approach ever closer to the 'experience itself' carries a strong potential for more, not less, mediation in cultural encounters and a growing mutual ingratiation between fieldworker and correspondent.

²⁹ Ian Russell, *Traditional Singing in West Sheffield, 1970-2*.

³⁰ R. W. Pacey, *Lincolnshire Folk Music*.

³¹ Ginette Dunn, *Popular Singing Traditions in and around Snape and Blaxhall* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1977).

³² C. A. Pegg, *Music and Society in East Suffolk* (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985).

³³ Ginette Dunn, *The Fellowship of Song: Popular Singing Traditions in East Suffolk* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

³⁴ David Atkinson, *English Folk Song: an introductory bibliography*, 10.

This Jack Beeforth study will contribute to the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century discourse on vernacular singers and their songs. Moreover, initially grounded as it has been on one singer, the study's elaboration, to embrace three other performers in the vernacular idiom, has informed all their personal narratives, their songs, and the vernacular tradition which their lives have illuminated.